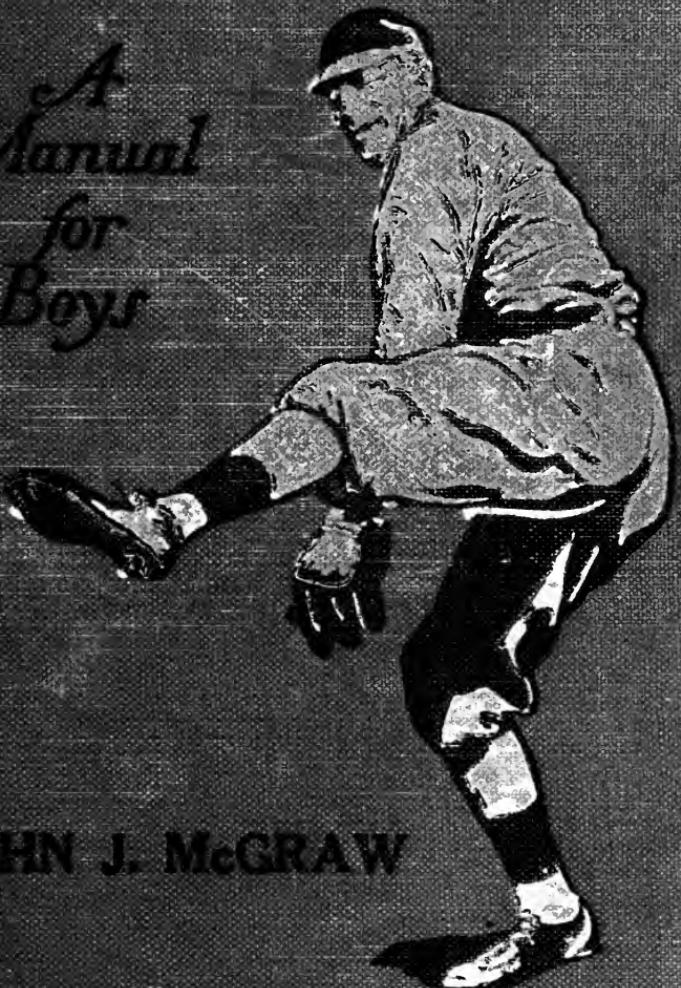
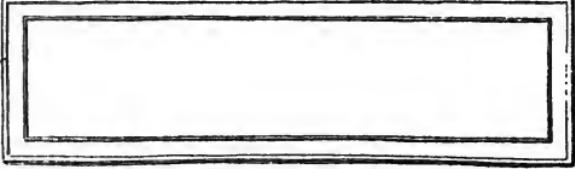


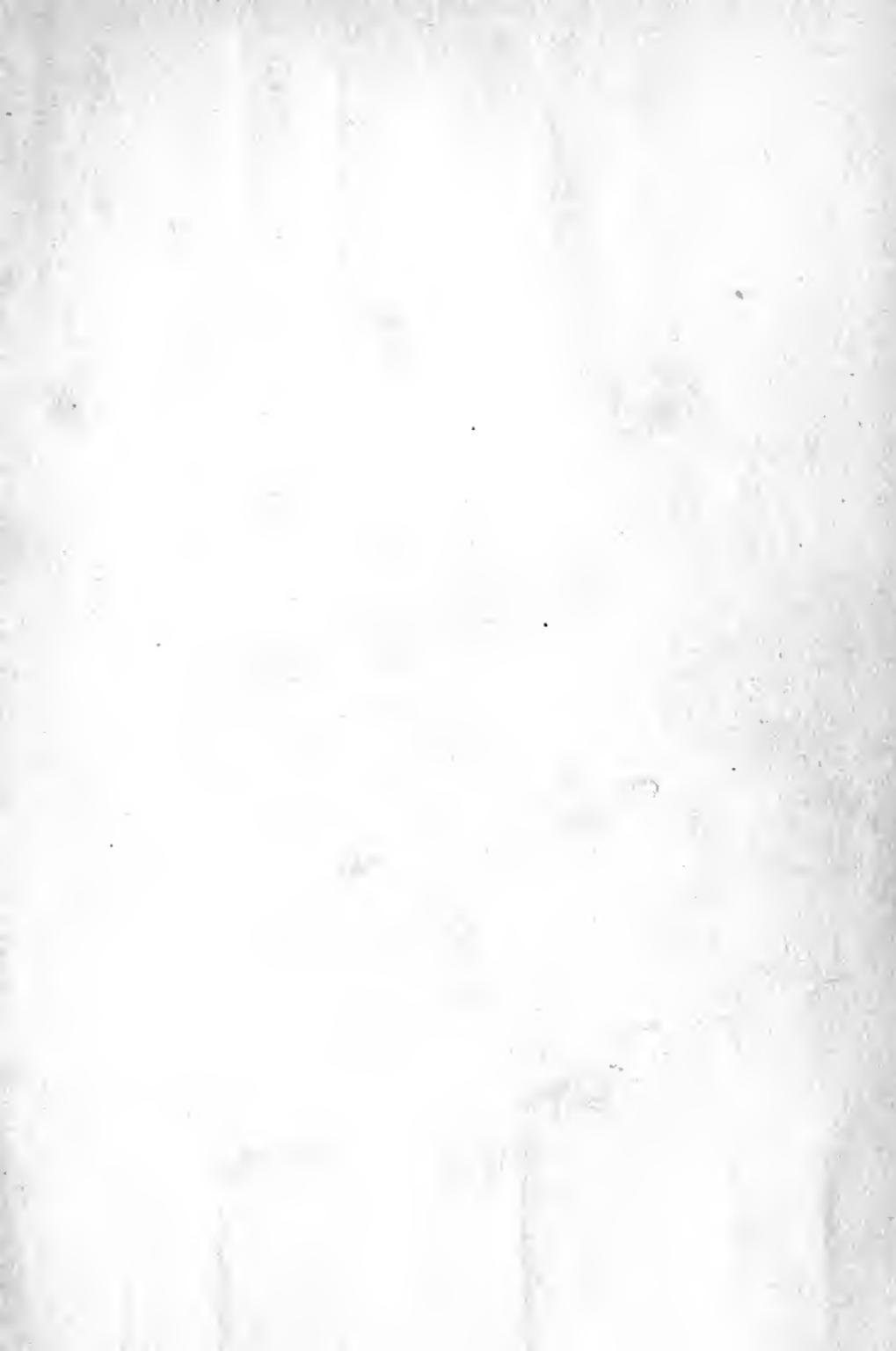
HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

*A
Manual
for
Boys*



By JOHN J. McGRAW





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation





JOHN J. McGRAW
Manager of the Champion Giants.

HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

A MANUAL FOR BOYS

BY
JOHN J. McGRAW

THIRTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS
FROM PHOTOGRAPHS OF BIG
LEAGUE STARS IN ACTUAL PLAY

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

70 MIKE 292245
AMERICAN

GV867
M2

COPYRIGHT, 1913, 1914, BY HARPER & BROTHERS
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLISHED JUNE, 1914

D-X

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWORD	vii
I.—THE CATCHER	1
II.—THE PITCHER—STYLE OF DE- LIVERY	18
III.—THE PITCHER—CONTROL AND THE CURVE AND FAST BALLS	35
IV.—THE PITCHER—THE SLOW BALL, THE SPITTER, FREAK DELIVERIES, AND FIELDING THE POSITION	48
V.—FIRST BASE	63
VI.—SECOND BASE	76
VII.—THE SHORTSTOP	89
VIII.—THIRD BASE	94
IX.—THE OUTFIELD	106
X.—BATTING	114
XI.—BASE RUNNING	126
XII.—TEAM WORK	138

FOREWORD

IN spite of the popular belief that ball players are born and not made, many are manufactured, or perhaps developed is a better word. In this series of lesson talks on the various positions on a ball club, I shall try to instruct my readers the same as I do the young fellows who go South to Marlin, Texas, for their first Spring practice with the Giants. Only, I shall go into more detail, endeavoring to show the boy or the young man how he can become a good ball player if he has the physical ability.

By physical ability I mean a certain liteness of body, combined with speed. Besides the physique, a good ball player must have nerve and grit, more than the average person suspects is necessary for the game. Nerve, speed, and liteness can all be developed if the reader will conscientiously, systematically and patiently cultivate these qualities as he plays the game.

I do not predict that the boy or young man

FOREWORD

who reads and studies this series of lessons will develop into a Big Leaguer, because there is room for only so many Big League ball players, and none but the best can fill these places. Only a few lawyers or physicians or men in any profession make big money, and they are the top notchers in their trades, the same as the Big Leaguer is in baseball.

But I do say that the boy or the young man who studies these articles carefully and heeds the advice which I shall give will be a better ball player than if he had not. I also say that, if he intends to make baseball his profession, he has a better chance of getting into the major leagues by studying these lessons than he would have scrambling along under no instruction at all or under merely local and scattered tuition.

Besides the educational angle, these lessons should stimulate the boy or the youth to play baseball. It should make him healthier and fitter to fight life's battles. He will be benefited by the exercise and will get more enjoyment out of the game if he plays it well. If a reader has no intention of playing professional baseball, these lessons should induce him to lead an outdoor life, in which he will get lots of red blood into his veins. My pur-

pose in giving this course of instruction is to get out a sensible and plain book on how to play the various positions in baseball with the idea that perhaps it will develop the American boys and make them better men.

It is not my intention to try to make professional ball players, although, as I have said, the boy or the young man with that ambition will be benefited by this course of instruction. Baseball develops the boy and makes him manly. It gives him qualities which he will need later along in life, including health and grit, or "fight," as ball players say. There never was a good ball player or good citizen, for that matter, who was a quitter.

It is my intention to devote at least one lesson to each position, besides taking up batting, base running, training, and general team work, and try to make my points clear with photographs of major league players in action. It is best to go right around the team, starting with the position of catcher. Therefore, let us consider this first.



How to Play Baseball

I

THE CATCHER

THE position of catcher is one of the most important on a baseball club. Grit is probably more essential in a catcher than in any other player—that is, the physical courage to face bare spikes when a runner is sliding into the plate, and to get a foul tip on the bare hand and like it.

I would not recommend that a light boy try to become a catcher unless he has other qualities which make that his position. There is so much blocking off the plate to be done that it requires a fellow of weight, who can stand hard bumps, to do it. Then, too, a bigger catcher makes a better target for the pitcher and is inclined to give the latter more control. Such a catcher makes a pitcher look better to the umpire, because he can handle the delivery more easily.

The big fellow is generally slower than the smaller boy, but speed can be better applied

2 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

elsewhere on a ball team than behind the bat. It is not necessary that the catcher be a fast man because his constant crouching position will slow him up after a time, anyway. But the big fellow can reach all around and pull down balls that might get away from a smaller backstop. He can make wide ones look more like strikes and has a better chance of convincing the umpire than the smaller catcher. It does not require so much effort for him to pull in wide balls, and he has not so many passed balls as the smaller catcher. There are many reasons why the catcher should be a bigger man or boy.

Most boys who get up as high as the Big Leagues do not know what position they should play even then, so that youngsters need not be convinced they cannot be good catchers just because they have always pitched or done something else up to this time. On the New York Giants at present are Murray and Snodgrass, both of whom came to me as catchers. It was I who discovered that their right positions were in the outfield. "Larry" Doyle came as a third baseman, and he is most valuable at second. Therefore, if a boy is big, but lacks speed, I would recommend that he try to develop into a catcher.

Catching is a dangerous job, but most boys make the position more perilous than it really is by the way in which they handle themselves. The amateur or beginner is inclined to get back too far from the batter. He is usually laboring under the delusion that the further he is from the bat the safer. This is not true.

The catcher should work up as close under the bat as possible. (Illustration No. 1.) Catchers are always injured working back from the bat. The ball has a chance to shoot, if the batter makes a foul tip, when the receiver is too far away. Up close, a foul tip is not apt to break a finger because there is not so much time for it to change its direction.

Young players often believe catching right up under the bat is dangerous because they are likely to be hit with the bat when the batter swings at the ball. This is not so. The catcher should work down beneath the hitter and close up.

There are numerous advantages of this position besides the already mentioned one of safety.

The catcher, being close up under the bat, helps a pitcher. He is better on curve balls if the twirler is "breaking" them low. If he is back, he gets these low curves in the dirt

4 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

or on the pickup, and, besides increasing the danger of passed balls, and runners on the bases scoring as a result, they do not look so good to the umpire. The catcher must always bear in mind that he is helping the pitcher by making an impression on the umpire in the way he handles the delivery. A good catcher will get a lot of doubtful strikes called for his pitcher. Understand, I am not counseling any unfair tactics. If the catcher is clever enough to handle the ball to shade the decisions toward his pitcher, it is considered fair in baseball.

By being close up under the bat, the catcher, as I have hinted, is a better mark for the pitcher and generally gives him more control. The twirler naturally delivers the ball at the catcher and not to the batter, and this target right behind the plate is a big aid to a man inclined to be wild. If any of my readers ever have a chance to see "Jimmy" Archer, the Chicago National League catcher, work, they should take advantage of it. He has an almost perfect position behind the bat. He has also acquired a snap throw, while squatting on his toes, that cannot be mastered by many men. It is desirable, but not essential to a good catcher.

There is another important feature in the work of a catcher which no boy or young man who desires to excel should overlook. It is what Big Leaguers call "shaping the ball."

Now, you take most young catchers and they will let their arms give with the ball—that is, they will draw their hands away from the plate and batter when they receive the ball. They have a notion that this stops it "stinging." It doesn't much. What does this do? There is only one answer. When a catcher is pulling the ball away from the plate, or giving with it all the time, instead of going out with his hands to meet it, he is losing a lot of strikes that really are good strikes.

The umpire has to judge the ball partially from where the catcher gets it because it comes so fast. When you get a catcher pulling them off the line of the plate, he is losing a lot of strikes and working his pitcher into the hole all the time, a thing to be avoided. Many times a catcher is quite as much to blame for the pitcher getting into the hole as the pitcher is himself. As for a catcher "stinging" his hands while wearing the big mitt, all that is necessary to remark is, his hands should be hard enough to catch the ball, anyway.

Now, I want all my readers to get the idea

6 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

of what I mean by "shaping the ball." As the ball is delivered by the pitcher, have your hands coming toward the plate instead of pulling away from it. In this way you may get some doubtful strikes that otherwise the umpire would call balls. You are pulling all the pitches in toward the heart of the plate, or "shaping" them toward it. In any way that the catcher can help the pitcher, he is aiding his team because the twirler is the vital cog in the machine, and the catcher is supposed to handle him. It is a well known fact, and recognized among baseball men, that some catchers cannot handle some pitchers because they worry them. That is the reason you see by the daily box scores in the newspapers the same batteries work together so much. They get used to each other.

To develop this trick of "shaping the ball," I would advise the young fellow to stand in front of a mirror and practice the motions of catching correctly without any ball. He then can see how his arms ought to swing in toward the plate instead of away from it.

There is another reason for pushing the arms toward the plate instead of drawing them away and that is the advantage it gives in throwing. The only proper way for a catcher

to throw to catch a man stealing a base is with a snap. (Illustration No. 2.) There is never any time for a windup. If the catcher tries to take a windup, he will find runners stealing bases on him right along. He loses too much time in getting the windup.

Now, as you read this, try something. Catch the ball the wrong way by drawing the arms away from the plate, and you will find it almost impossible to make a throw without taking a windup. The position of the arms after the ball is caught makes the windup necessary in getting it away. They are away back by the body. Now, try "shaping the ball"—that is, shooting the hands in toward the plate—and you will find you are in a position to snap the ball down to second without drawing the arm away back. That is what I mean by the windup. In the snap throw, the hand is not drawn back further than the line of the shoulder, and impetus is received from the arm alone without putting the body into the throw at all. This quick throwing is one of the most difficult things a catcher has to do, and the "shaping of the ball" helps him to accomplish it. Try it and see how it helps you.

If a boy wants to be a good catcher let

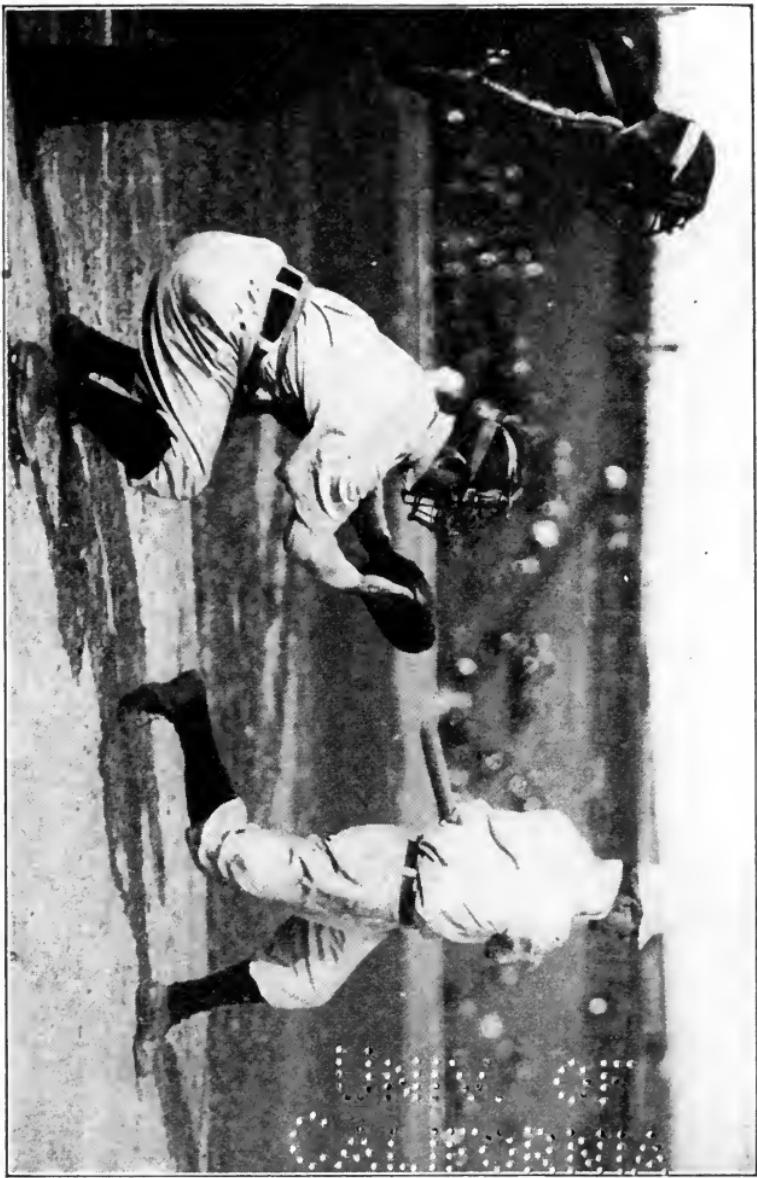
8 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

him practice this "shaping of the ball" until he has it perfected. It simply means shooting the hands toward the perfect strike spot on the plate instead of drawing them away from it. The perfection of it is absolutely essential because it benefits the pitcher, the catcher, the entire club. By the "perfect strike spot" I mean an imaginary point, waist high, over the center of the plate.

Now, let us consider the throwing a little. This is an important duty of the catcher. He must have a good arm and learn to throw accurately. If you cannot do this, you might just as well make up your mind that you are going to lose the close games before you start. A stolen base at a critical stage has won many a ball game because on second a runner is in a position to score, and, if the other side is going to run wild on the bases, there is no use in playing.

The arm can be developed by practicing throwing diligently, but not too much of it all at once. Be careful about a sore arm. Practice is the only way in which accuracy can be accomplished, too. Do it with a batter in the box. Get some boy to stand up there and act as a dummy and swing at the ball if necessary, but always practice under

Illustration No. 1—Catcher close up under batter. Correct form. Note thumb sticking out from bare hand. Incorrect and dangerous.



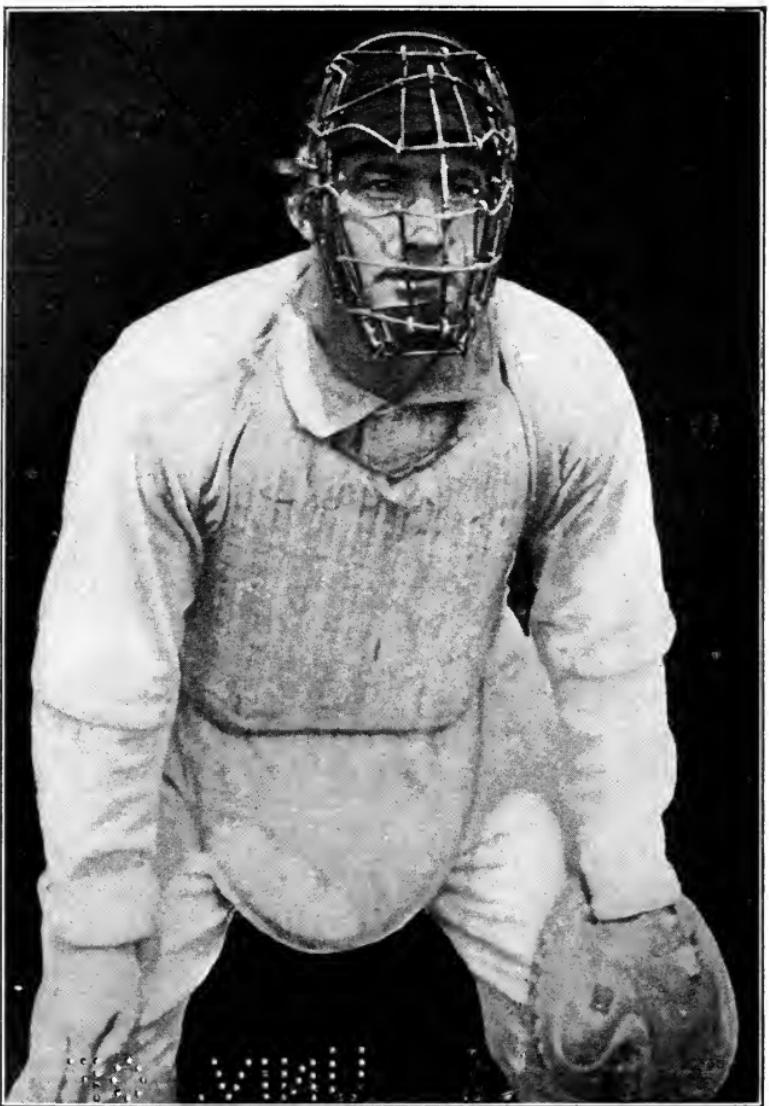


Illustration No. 4—Roger Bresnaham of the Cubs. Note position of thumb close to hand to prevent injury. Correct style.

the proper conditions. Throw directly at the bag and not at a moving infielder, having previously arranged with the second baseman and shortstop by means of signs which one will cover. The player covering is supposed to be there when the ball arrives. Make your target the bag about a foot above the ground. This requires a great amount of practice. The same applies in throwing to third base. Drive the ball at the bag.

Many boys complain when they first start to catch that they cannot help blinking their eyes as the batter swings at the ball—a trick which makes them worthless as catchers and greatly increases the dangers of the job. There is only one way to overcome this blinking tendency and that also is by practice. The boy must get used to the hitter swinging the bat and pay no attention to it. The good catchers hardly see the bat swing. Most any boy can overcome this fault with practice. Always wear a mask and chest protector when you are catching because, once a young fellow is badly hurt, it is liable to make him shy ever afterwards. It also gives you a safer feeling, and the blinking is easier to overcome then. You must get used to catching in a mask.

10 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

Now, the catcher must practically run the team because he sees opportunities that the other men are not in a position to observe. The field is like a blackboard to the catcher, for he faces it and sees everything. The Big League catcher watches how his fielders are playing and gives signs to the pitcher for the kind of balls which are more apt to go to the fielders when hit.

For instance, a right handed batter is more apt to hit a curved ball on the outside of the plate to right field than to left, so, if the catcher sees his right fielder is playing around near the line, he signs for this curve on the outside corner. But this development is generally confined to the Big Leagues and is too involved for instruction of this sort. It will be time enough for a man to pick this up when he reaches the majors. He will get along very successfully without it up to that time.

A catcher must be very careful about giving his signs so that the coaches at first and third bases will not see them. The catcher should crouch down and give his signs deep between his knees and within his glove so that they are just visible to the pitcher. (Illustration No. 3.) He should not expose them long,

but have them all set and uncover them so that he "flashes it," as professionals say.

In the Big League smart coaches are always on the lookout for the catcher's signs, hoping that they can find out what is going to be pitched to the batter. Then they flash it to the batter, and he has a better chance of hitting the ball if he has been tipped off whether it will be a curve or a straight one. This advanced stuff only occurs in the Big Leagues. There is not much chance of a coacher getting the catcher's signs and sliding them back to the batter in a minor league or amateur contest. Nevertheless, if a man ever expects to be a good catcher, he should be very careful about covering up his signs. This sign concealment is vital to success.

The catcher should have arranged two or three different sets of signs with his pitcher before the game starts, or previous to the opening of the season. Then, if he thinks the other side is getting his signals in a game, he can switch to another set by walking out to the box and informing the pitcher of the change. That is what the battery conferences, so often seen on a Big League ball field, are generally for.

On the Giants, all the pitchers have a set

12 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

of signs so that if we think the other team is getting our catcher's, the pitcher can be the source. He gives them by nodding his head or with his feet. But I would not advise this for a club of young fellows because it makes it all too involved. Mathewson, of the Giants, gave all the signs in one of the world's series games with the Athletics in 1911. Meyers sent out fake signals, of course, to throw the other side off. If a catcher is giving "phoney" signs, he wants to give lots of them.

I cannot emphasize too strongly the necessity of a young catcher being thorough in his signs. When he flashes a signal to a baseman, he should have arranged an answering sign with that man so he will know that the baseman has received his sign and understands it. The catcher must have a set of signals with all the infielders to arrange about who is to cover the bag when a man is stealing second, and to signal when he is going to throw the ball to a base in an effort to get a runner too far away from the bag. The great thing is to "cross" the other team whenever possible.

A catcher must watch for runners stealing. If he thinks that the runner is to leave, he signs for a pitchout, which means that the

pitcher is to throw the ball wide on purpose where the batter can't hit it and waste one in order that the catcher may have a better chance to throw. He can get the ball away quicker and has more chance of nailing the runner at second base on a pitchout.

But the catcher must not be too liberal in ordering these pitchouts because the smart base runner will try to make the catcher think he is going to steal in order to draw the wasted ball. This puts the pitcher into the hole, and the runner has a better chance of getting to second as a result. Therefore, the catcher must exercise great judgment in asking for a pitchout. It is a duel of wits between the catcher and the base runner, with each one trying to get the other in the hole. If the runner can draw two pitchouts from the twirler, then the latter is in the hole and has to put the ball over the plate for the batter, who has a better chance to hit. By a pitcher being "in the hole," I mean giving the batter an advantage by pitching balls.

When I come to talk about the infielders, I shall have more to say about the workings of the signs between the catcher and the various infielders. It will be easier to do this when I take up each position individually instead

14 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

of considering it all in a lump now. The catcher should read all the articles on the various positions because in that way he will have a better line on the workings of the team as a whole. This is true of the fellows who expect to play any position. They must read all these articles.

A catcher must have plenty of pepper because he is expected to keep the rest of the club on its toes and encourage the other players. He must keep close track of the game, and frequently can shout a warning or a direction to one of the infielders or pitchers which saves a run. The catcher is not supposed to talk to batters, but he should talk to the pitcher and steady him if necessary. Let him argue with the twirler if he begins to weaken.

"Now," say to him, "you pitched this ball to this fellow before and got away with it. Let's try it again."

Maybe the catcher is signing for an altogether different one, but his words have the effect desired on the batter. It also gives the pitcher more confidence.

There is one other thing which I want to emphasize. Let the catcher always keep the thumb of his bare hand close to his fingers.

(Illustration No. 4.) Otherwise, it is likely to be broken off by a foul tip or a sharp breaking curve. Hold the thumb right tight to the hand in catching. This direction is very important and will save many painful injuries if followed.

There is not much to tell a man about catching fouls. Catchers, after they have been in the game for a time, learn to start with the crack of the bat and instinctively go in the right direction for a foul. This can only be acquired by practice. Of course, the fast catcher has the advantage over the slower one in getting fouls, but much depends on the start. Tear off the mask and dig. Do not turn around any more than possible in chasing the fly, because in this way you get "wound up," lose your bearings, get dizzy, and are more apt to miss the ball. In handling foul flies, catch the ball flat in the big glove when possible, and clamp the hand on top of it hard, because the ball will spin out of the glove if you don't. Fouls spin. Also shout when you go after a fly so you won't have any conflicts with the first and third baseman. Yell, "I've got it," or "You take it."

The blocking off of runners from the plate is one of the most dangerous things that a

16 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

catcher has to do. Many players come into the backstop with their spikes showing and try to scare him away. I would recommend that a catcher use shin guards, as these often save a broken leg or bad cuts and make the base runners more careful about how they slide into a catcher. Illustration No. 5 shows how to block a man off, but I would advise against this as much as possible because of the risk of injury. Whenever he has time, the catcher should go a few feet down the base line and touch the man, but, in a pinch, when the runner slides, the catcher must block. Otherwise, it may cost his team a run.

In summing up, I want to say that the catcher should be "sizey" and must possess brains, for important plays revolve around him, and he can save many a game by quick thinking. That is the idea—to win—but, if necessary, be a good loser. I would honestly advise a boy to become a catcher if he has any adaptability for it, because there is more room in the Big Leagues for good catchers than for candidates for other positions. Good catchers are very scarce. A man does not need to be so fast to be a catcher, but he should be a fair batter and have the old grit. Resort to plenty of practice. Never

try to cover weaknesses, but work to overcome them. And don't forget to "shape the ball."

Don't be reckless needlessly. Remember, when a good man is hurt and out of the game, it breaks up the whole club, especially when he is the catcher. Have an understanding with your infielders. Don't go after the same ball, and then let it drop between you. That has lost many a game.

And always play hard.

II

THE PITCHER

THE position of pitcher is the most important one on a ball club, the twirler probably comprising about thirty per cent. of the entire strength of the team. The rest of the defence makes up about another thirty per cent. and the aggression or offence is equal to forty per cent., because a ball club cannot win any games, no matter how good it may be at fielding, unless it can collect some runs off the opposing team.

Therefore, I have decided to preface my three lessons on pitching with a few general remarks which should be very helpful. In discussing the requisites of a pitcher, I shall not go into the extreme fine points which are required in a man fit for Big League service, but I will try to give my readers a thorough grounding in the art of pitching that should be very beneficial in developing them if they will follow my directions. If my student ever does get up to the Big League, his manager

will drill him in the finer points, which are perhaps too involved to set down clearly on paper.

And I hope that if any of the boys or young men who read these articles ever should get to me for a chance in the Big League, he will mention his preliminary study in these lessons, as I am eager to see just how effective these talks are going to be. But if any reader ever does reach me and admits that he has carefully gone over these lessons and then repeats some of the faults against which I am going to warn him in these talks, he need not expect to be complimented on his ability. Also, please remember that I am always ready to help young pitchers and am constantly searching for men of ability. I would be glad to hear from any who can show recommendations that would warrant a trial with me.

First, I like my pitchers to be big and rangy for many reasons. Lack of size does not necessarily prevent a man from becoming a successful pitcher, but it handicaps him. Some small men have been good twirlers—for example, Warhop, of the Yankees, who is said to be a very efficient performer; Jack Pfeister, formerly of the Cubs; Clarke Griffith, now the

manager of Washington, and others. But the smaller the man, the bigger and stancher his heart must be to succeed, because the physical strain will be greater.

Right here, I want to say something about the mental qualifications of a pitcher. He must have grit and a steady head. There is no job on the club so trying to the nerves, because it is up to the pitcher in every pinch to down the other team or be beaten. He must never admit, even to himself, that he is whipped, no matter how tight the situation is. This is true of every position on a ball club, and also in the game of life, but perhaps the stick-to-it attribute is more necessary in a twirler than in any other player. If he begins to give up, it often has a depressing effect on the rest of the club. He must not be upset by errors in his defence, either, because all teams will do this. It is generally up to him to hold the club together.

Probably more boys or young men desire to be pitchers than to play any other position, perhaps because they believe there is more glory attached to the work of that job when they are winners. I have made Big League pitchers out of men who had the natural and physical ingredients. This shows that pitchers

are not all born, but can be manufactured by the proper treatment. Tesreau is a star who is a manufactured product. He had few of the gifts of a finished pitcher when he came to me, but he had the body and the head and the heart, and I made him a pitcher. If a boy should want some good ideas on pitching, let him watch Christy Mathewson work if he ever gets an opportunity. To my mind, he has the greatest combination of mental and physical qualities ever assembled in a twirler. Notice him when his club makes errors behind him. Does he lose heart? No. He only works the harder. That is what you fellows must learn to do. I say "you fellows" because I feel as if I were talking right to a big bunch of recruits in a spring camp.

STYLE OF DELIVERY.

THIS lesson will be divided into two sections: (a) the Pitcher's Position in the Box with the Bases Empty, and (b) the Pitcher's Position in the Box with Runners on the Bases.

Position in the Box with the Bases Empty

When there are no runners on the bases, a pitcher wants to use his swing and windup

22 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

to the best advantage, as this is a big help in delivering the ball. Therefore, I would advise a boy cultivating one style of delivery first and sticking to that rather than switching around from one to another and being unfinished in all forms. It is best to perfect one style. I would classify deliveries as follows:

- 1.—Overhand.
- 2.—Side arm.
- 3.—Underhand.

The most effective form of delivery is overhand, and I would advise all pitchers to aim to acquire this style for many reasons. It is a particularly desirable form for a tall pitcher, as he gets more leverage with the overhand swing and a better break on his curve ball. The ball is also easier to control when shot from an overhand swing.

It is possible for a pitcher to develop an individual swing with eccentricities in the movement, but at first I would advise a young pitcher against it. It is too involved. He should practice a regular swing. This can be done without a ball. It is not a bad idea to do this before a mirror if there is a large one handy.

The regulation overhand swing starts with the ball and both hands held against the chest, and then the right or left arm, according to whether the man is a southpaw or a right handed pitcher, is swung in a short circle, with the muscles of the arm and body relaxed. Finally, the pitching hand is brought back over the head and joins the other when the twirler swings back on his right foot if he is a right hander, or the left for a southpaw.

A pitcher should swing as far backward as possible without losing his balance because in this way he tends to fool the batter by concealing the ball from his view for a moment. He should also pivot slightly on his back foot, which helps to conceal the ball. This long swing (Illustration No. 6) has two advantages:

1. The pitcher gets the weight of his body behind the ball and does not pitch entirely with his arm.
2. By his motion, he puzzles the batter as the latter watches the ball, and, when it disappears from view for a moment, the batter does not know exactly from where it will come. Some pitchers, after their arms have gone back on them, have lived in the Big Leagues for several seasons on their peculiar motions

24 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

alone, but I shall take them up later. The way to beat them is to get men on the bases, when they must cut this windup down.

Now comes the next important thing for a young pitcher to learn when he is practicing his swing with no runners on the bases. This is the style of placing the feet, which may make or break a twirler.

When ready to deliver the ball he should stand with both feet flat on the rubber, the arch of each foot on it, and the feet an equal distance from the batter and about fifteen to eighteen inches apart, the distance being adjustable to the pitcher's build and length of leg. Both feet are even or parallel in this position and flat on the rubber. The ball is held up against the breast before starting the swing. Then take the swing, as already directed, and try to feel the pitch start from down at the base of the spine. That means you are getting your back into it, and your arm will be working simply as a whip to snap the ball away and regulate its direction.

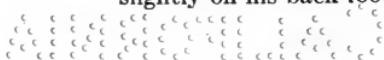
Be sure to cover the ball up with your gloved hand before starting the swing (that is, when the ball is held against your chest) because batters soon get to look at the position of the fingers to get a line on what to



Illustration No. 5—Dangerous but effective blocking, and necessary at times when the throw home is bad and the play close. "Ed" Sweeney of the New York Yankees blocking "Tris" Speaker of the Boston Red Sox.



Illustration No. 6—"Chief" Bender of the Athletics at top of swing just before delivering the ball. Note position carefully. The ball has been concealed from the batter by Bender's leg while he has pivoted slightly on his back foot.



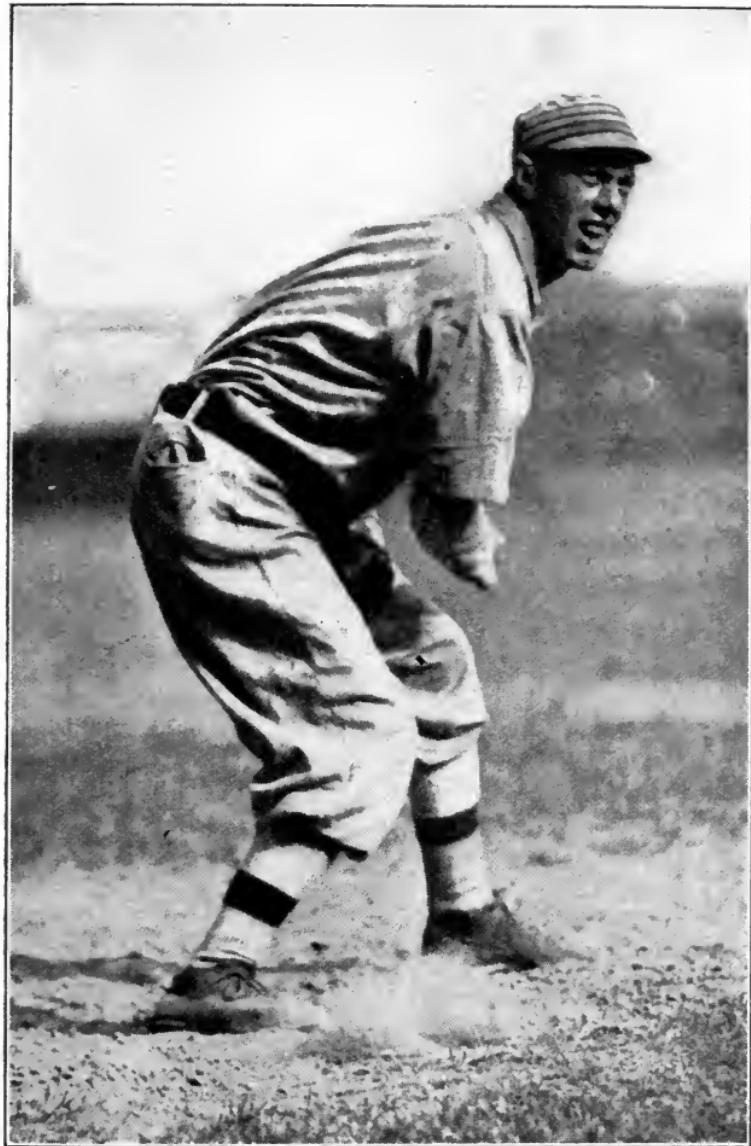


Illustration No. 7—John Coombs of the Athletics just after delivering the ball. Note how he has put his whole body into the pitch. He is also standing firmly on both feet ready to go after a baited ball.



Illustration No. 8—"Cy" Young delivering the ball with runners on the bases. His right foot is swinging around in front of the left after the pitch.

expect and become so expert at it that they can tell, when the pitching hand is exposed the least bit, whether to look for a fast one or a curved ball. Of course, the ball leaves the concealment during the swing, but is again covered by the glove when the hands meet over your head just before it is thrown. All varieties of balls should be delivered with the same motion, the changes of pace and curves being obtained by the manner in which the ball is thrown and the wrist snapped. These will be taken up in a subsequent part of this lesson on pitching.

Now, to review briefly the rudiments of the overhand swing. First, be sure to get your feet even on the rubber and then cover the ball. Take a long swing, concluding with the motion back over the head and balancing on one foot when the ball is concealed from the batter for a moment. Come straight over and get your back into it, landing firmly on your feet with your left foot in front if you are a right handed pitcher, or your right in front if you are a southpaw. (Illustration No. 7.)

Landing firmly and properly on your feet is important, as pitchers who get tangled up and are off their balance after they have de-

26 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

livered the ball cannot field their position, and the visiting team will beat them by bunting. This is the weakness of many pitchers in the Big Leagues now, and they are constantly being defeated by bunting clubs. Wise managers will not start them against a team with good bunters on it. Therefore, be sure to land firmly on your feet with your weight on the front foot and ready to start in any direction for a batted ball.

Do not forget the long swing with the back in the pitch. "Bugs" Raymond, if you ever saw him work, was a splendid example of the perfect pitching machine. He started his motion from the base of the spine, and it was from this that he obtained his great speed and the jump on his fast ball.

I thought "Bugs" had the most perfect pitching motion I have ever seen. He could go out and pitch all morning for batting practice, and then go in and pitch a game on the same afternoon because his easy motion did not tire him. This easy swing is a great thing to obtain, as opposing managers often figure on a pitcher tiring when his delivery is awkward and play to make him pitch every ball that they can, expecting to beat him in the final innings when he wearies and weakens.

The side arm delivery is used more frequently and more successfully than the underhand style, so we shall consider that next. This is valuable because, through it, a pitcher obtains a cross fire that is puzzling and shoots the ball at the batter from a different angle. It is not possible to get as much leverage on the ball with this sort of delivery, but many pitchers use it very effectively, "Ed" Walsh, the great pitcher of the Chicago White Sox, being the most striking example.

The delivery is accomplished with the same sort of a preliminary swing that is used with the overhand pitching, the variation being obtained in the step, and in letting the arm swing around to the side just before the ball is delivered instead of straight over.

Take the same swing that you use in getting ready for the overhand pitch and let the hands meet back over the head, balancing on the back foot. The front foot is raised off the ground, and the leg is coiled a little as in the overhand style. When your arm comes over, step out toward third base with your left foot, if you are a right hander. The average distance to step with this foot is about two feet, landing firmly on your feet, as in the other form, so as to field a batted ball

readily. The length of the step depends on the build of the pitcher.

The advantage in this form of delivery is that you shoot the ball at the batter from a new angle, and he is suddenly surprised, the ball having been concealed for a moment when you took your backward swing as in the overhand variety. In doing this, pivot on your back foot slightly so your body swings between your pitching hand and the batter. The preliminary position is the same as for the overhand style, with both feet flat on the rubber and parallel.

The underhand swing I do not care for and never recommend it. It is hard to control the ball, delivering it from this unnatural position, and impossible to obtain so much speed. Its one advantage is that the batter is sometimes fooled because the ball comes at him from an unexpected place. Few big men have employed the style successfully in the Big League. "Joe" McGinnity, formerly of the New York Giants; "Jack" Warhop of the New York Yankees, and "Slim" Sallee of the St. Louis Nationals are the three notable examples of men who have been effective with it. Many others have tried it and failed.

Young pitchers often cultivate this form, thinking that it gives them some kind of an up curve which is particularly deceptive to the batter. If any pitcher in baseball ever had a real up curve, I have not seen it. These underhand twirlers get a gradual rise on the ball because it is started from a low position, usually below the waist line, but there is no upward "break" on it. The angle is the only thing puzzling to a batsman.

Besides making the ball hard to control, this sort of delivery is awkward and frequently leaves the pitcher off his balance and in no position to field a hit or a bunt. The preliminary swing is taken in the same way as for the overhand and side arm, but the arm is brought through below the shoulder instead of above it as in the other two styles. The first change comes when the arm is drawn back. The two hands do not meet over the head, but on one side, and the body is pivoted on the back foot until a right hander faces third base.

Now, as I have said, I would advise a young pitcher to select one style of delivery first, preferably the overhand, and stick to it until he has perfected it. Let him cultivate control with the swing he has chosen. Then, if he

30 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

desires to "mix them up," he might practice the side arm swing, to work in occasionally with the overhand delivery. This combination should make the most successful pitcher. I am strongly prejudiced against the underhand ball and would not recommend it or try to teach it even to a small man.

After the pitcher has practiced his swing, let him begin to vary the position and altitude of his hand when he lets the ball go. This inclines to fool a batter as he watches for the ball. If the ball is always coming from the one position, the batter can set himself for it. Some pitchers are successful and always deliver the ball from the one posture, but they offset the knowledge which batters get of their style of swing by the information which they gather by studying a batter's form and looking for his weakness. If a pitcher has developed good control, then he can shoot at this "groove" with confidence in his ability to put the ball where he wants it.

In getting the swing do not become discouraged. I want to preach patience and practice in these talks, as that is the only way in which results can be obtained. At first I would suggest trying the swing without a ball, and then back some friend who does not aspire

to be a twirler, or perhaps your father—if he has faith in you as a pitcher—up against a fence or barn door with a catcher's mitt on and practice the swing with the primary object of obtaining control. Let your volunteer catcher umpire honestly. That is the only way in which results can be obtained.

When a fellow thinks that he is perfected in his regular style, he might practice eccentric motions, such as "Dummy" Taylor, formerly of the Giants, and Sallee, now with St. Louis, use. But I would not urge him to do it. Taylor remained in the National League for a season or two just on his bewildering swing. He would stand in the preliminary position already indicated, take three or four swings in small circles with his right arm, and then whirl entirely around, facing second base, before delivering the ball, leaving the batter nothing to look at except his back. The ball would then shoot out from some unexpected position. In the last days of his Big League career, when I started Taylor I took him out just as soon as men got on the bases and he had to cut out his swing. I knew that "Dummy" would be beaten without the whirl.

Sallee is the same sort of a pitcher, tying

himself up into knots and letting the ball go from some unexpected place, sometimes straight over his head and again off his shoe tops. But I would advise against these eccentric deliveries until a pitcher has perfected some simpler swing and has gained control of the ball with it. It is time enough to practice on varieties when you begin to feel your arm going, but as long as you have the real "stuff" you don't need a moving picture motion.

Position of Pitcher with Runners on the Bases

After men get on the bases, the swing must go, with only one or two exceptions, because a base runner can get his start as soon as a pitcher makes a motion. When a base runner is on third base, then the motion does not need to be cut out because he cannot start for any place except home, and the chances are all against stealing home. It's a foolish thing to attempt. He must score on a hit, and it doesn't make much difference how much of a lead he takes with the motion. With men on second and third, or with the bases full, it is also possible to use the windup, but under any other circumstances with men on the bases,

it must be cut out. Always remember where your base runners are.

When the swing is eliminated, the pitcher's preliminary position in the box is altered entirely. The left foot is placed about two feet in front of the right one if the pitcher is right handed, and the position is reversed for a southpaw. The heel of the back foot is just touching the rubber. Stand so as to see the base on which there is a runner if possible. For instance, if the man is on first base, watch him to see that he does not take too large a lead. Base stealing is often due as much to careless pitchers as poor catchers. Do not take any swing, but draw the arm back and pick up the front foot at the same time, setting it down as the ball leaves the hand. The back foot swings around in front (Illustration No. 8) so that the pitcher, in this way, gets his weight behind the ball, and his back into the pitch without a windup.

The final position of a pitcher, after delivering the ball without a windup, is with his right foot in front of the left. Remember, the left foot was in front in the preliminary position. This is for a right hand pitcher, and the position is reversed for a left hander. The right foot, when the pitcher is right

handed, is brought around in front by lifting it off the rubber just after the ball leaves your hand, and just as the left foot is planted in the step taken with the pitch. This brings you up firmly on your feet, with neither foot on the rubber, and ready to field the ball.

To repeat, in the preliminary position the left foot of a right hander is about two feet in front of the right, just the heel of which is against the rubber. With the delivery, the front foot is raised and planted with the pitch. The back foot then swings off the rubber and around in front to get the back in the delivery and to obtain the follow through. A pitcher can take his foot off the rubber as soon as the ball leaves his hand.

It will require diligent practice to accomplish this, as it is the hardest thing to do in pitching, the idea being to get the back behind the pitch without the preliminary swing. When standing in the box before pitching, be sure that your feet are not too close together, as base runners take advantage of the resultant long step to get a start. One pitcher, who broke into the league with the Boston Nationals a few years ago, had this fault, and men were stealing bases on him almost at will before the flaw was corrected.

III

THE PITCHER

Control and the Curve and Fast Balls

AFTER the student has mastered the position in the box, both with men on the bases and with the bases empty, let him work on his control, aiming to accomplish it while still observing the talks which I gave on position in the preceding chapter. When you start on a new branch of pitching, do not abandon what you have already learned.

Control is the most valuable single quality a pitcher can possess. Of what use are curves and spitballs and freak deliveries if you cannot get the ball over the plate? All the opposing club will have to do to beat you will be for each batter to wait for four balls and walk around the bases. Control can be acquired in only one way, and that is by constant practice. There is an oft-repeated lament about young pitchers:

"He has every curve in the world," says the recommender, "and speed to burn, but he lacks control."

The pitcher, himself, is to blame for lacking this asset. Patience and practice will bring it to any fellow, and the younger he is when he starts to acquire it, the easier it will come, like learning a foreign language or how to swim. The preliminary step in getting control is to take a boy, younger than yourself, probably, because he will stand better without hitching, and back him up against a barn or fence and pitch to him. Put down a plate, of the exact dimensions of the standard plate or as near it as possible, and then let the boy who is catching act as umpire.

"Now," he should say, "this fellow (meaning the imaginary batter) hits them high and on the outside. Try to keep them low and close to him." That is the way Wilbert Robinson talks to my young pitchers in Spring training in Texas.

Do not try to curve the ball at all at first, but just practice your swing and getting the control. Let the boy who is umpiring be just. By vigorous practice you will become so you can throw the ball just where you want to and can pitch at the batter's "groove." By the

term "groove," Big Leaguers mean a certain place where the particular batter does not like the ball. Most batters have a "groove" which can be discovered only through diligent observation. This "groove" is not so apparent in younger batters as it is in the minor and major leagues, where baseball is a more highly developed science.

To ascertain what kind of a ball a batter does not like, keep track of those he hits. If he steps back when you pitch, keep the ball on the outside of the plate, and the batter who steps back will never hit it. If a hitter crowds the plate, you might shoot the first one at him to drive him back, and then slip the next one over the outside of the plate. When you do not know a batter's weakness, a low ball on the outside is more apt to fool him than any other, because many young hitters have the habit of stepping back from the ball when they swing. This is an inexcusable fault in a hitter and one which a pitcher should take advantage of as soon as he sees it.

Therefore, let the young pitcher deliver straight balls until he can lay the ball accurately over any part of the plate he wants to. This is what Big Leaguers call "working the corners."

38 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

Now, I want to try to explain why the straight, overhand swing is more valuable in obtaining control than either the side arm or the rise ball. Study Diagram No. 1, and you will observe that the lines drawn up from the corners of the plate and those extended from the shoulders and the line of the knees of a batter form a rectangle. It is through some part of this rectangle that the ball must pass to be called a strike. Now, if you are pitching with a side arm motion, you are throwing at the narrow measurement of the rectangle. That is, you are throwing at the part bounded by the lines extended up from the edges of the plate, which is only seventeen inches wide, while the length of the rectangle depends upon the distance between the batter's knees and his shoulders. This, of course, varies for different men, according to their height, but is always considerably greater than the width of the rectangle. In other words, when you are using a side arm motion, you are pitching at a space as wide as the plate, while the straight overhand swing gives you the length of a batter from his knees to his shoulders as a target. Therefore, you see that the man with the straight overhand swing has a much better chance of getting the ball over the plate for a

strike than the one who employs only a side arm motion.

Now for curves. Of course, every good pitcher should be able to throw curves. Big Leaguers recognize only one kind of a curve, which is the drop, but most youngsters talk about the "out," which breaks away from the right-handed batter; the "in," which jumps toward a right-handed batter, and the "drop," not to mention the "out-drop." Really, there is no such thing as an in-curve. It is next to impossible to throw a ball exactly straight. If the ball is delivered so that all the impetus possible is given to it when thrown by a right-handed pitcher, it will be noticed that the ball will jump in toward the right-handed batter. This is not a curve, but a shoot. The ball has as little revolving motion as possible while passing from the pitcher to the catcher.

Let us consider this fast ball first. It should be held so that none of the fingers touch a seam. Take a baseball, and you will find it is possible to hold it so that none of the points of contact touch the seams. The advantage in this is that you get all the speed out of the ball with as little revolving motion as possible. When the fingers touch the seams, you drag the ball back just before you let go of it and

are bound to put "English" on it, as the pool players say. By "English," I mean that peculiar twisting motion which makes a ball break and curve in its course. I shall take that up later in discussing the curve. See Illustration No. 10 for the right way to hold the fast ball. Note none of the fingers is touching a seam.

Now, every ball that is pitched should be held in the same way. It is not the manner of holding which gives the variety in pitching, but the style of delivery. Always hold the ball with the thumb and the first two fingers pressed against it. Big League pitchers who are working every day, either in a game or practice, get callouses on their fingers where the ball touches them. Many boys have a mistaken notion that curves and shoots are obtained by the manner in which the ball is held. I have heard youngsters ask if two fingers gave an out and one an in and so on. This is not so.

Be sure to hold the ball with the thumb and two fingers, and do not think you have to squeeze the life out of it. It is only for freak and difficult deliveries, such as the "knuckle ball," that the ball is gripped otherwise than with the two fingers and thumb. You grip



Diagram No. 1.



Illustration No. 10—Position of fingers and thumb for fast ball.
None is touching the seams of the ball.



Illustration No. 11—How to hold the ball for a curve. Note that fingers and thumb are touching seams to give additional leverage.

Illustration No. 12—How Walsh holds his spitball. Held as in the photograph to the left, it will break “out”—towards the batter’s right. Held as in the second photograph, it will break straight down.



the ball slightly tighter for a curve than a fast one. Never wrap your hands around it, because then you will tip the batter that you are going to pitch a curve, you will lose control, and display general bad form. Always cover the ball with your glove before pitching.

The most valuable curve for a young fellow, I should say, is the drop. In the Big League, what is known as the old "round-house" curve is no good. This is what most boys label the out-drop. The reason it is not deceptive is because the ball starts to curve from the time it leaves the pitcher's hand, and the batter can see it curving and set himself for it. The sharper the break to a curve, the more valuable it is.

I would advise the youngster to begin immediately to learn to pitch the drop because, as I have said, the out-curve is not deceptive, for one thing, and it is hard to control, for another.

Now, to attain the drop. It is not difficult if my pupils will simply follow my instructions and practice. Grip the ball with the first two fingers and thumb, as I have said. If you wrap your whole hand around it, against which proceeding I have warned you, the curve will lose its sharp break and you will get the out-

42 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

drop or "round-house." Grip the ball rather loosely with the two fingers and the thumb on seams (Ill. No. 11). If a boy or young man will take a baseball and experiment, he will see that the thumb and two fingers can touch seams by holding a ball in a certain way. It is easy to discover how the ball should be held by experimenting. By getting as much leverage as possible from the seams, you add to the friction necessary to give the ball the revolving or spinning motion from which the curve results. After you have been pitching for a time, you will find your thumb and two fingers are calloused from where they touch the seams.

A curve ball naturally does not attain as much speed as the fast one because of its spinning motion against the air. A fast ball sails more. Therefore, do not try to throw your arm out in delivering a curve. Give it plenty of impetus, because the faster a curve breaks the more effective, but do not attempt to get speed at the cost of control and the curve.

When throwing the drop, bring the arm straight over and let the ball spin off the two fingers with which it is gripped. If you are a right-handed pitcher, the ball spins over the

index finger of your right hand, and, if left-handed, vice versa.

Now comes the important part about throwing this curve. It is the snap of the wrist just as the ball is leaving the hand which makes it curve. Bring the hand straight over from the shoulder, getting as much of the back and body into the pitch as possible, and then, just as you let the ball go, snap the wrist to give it the rotary motion. The whole thing is accomplished with the wrist and arm, and it is this necessary snap which makes it difficult for a pitcher to throw curve after curve. It is very wearing on the arm.

Now, to go over it again, because it is important. Grip the ball rather loosely with the thumb and first two fingers, with each touching a seam for the friction obtained. Bring the arm straight over, and, as the ball goes off over the side of your index finger, snap your wrist toward the ground. In pitching the drop, the palm of the hand of a right-handed pitcher is toward first base. That of a left-hander is toward third. The important things to remember about throwing this curve are to grip the ball with two fingers and the thumb, all touching the seams (the third finger barely touches the ball and does not grip it at all),

44 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

swing the arm straight over with the shoulder as a pivot, and give the wrist the final snap. Of course, do not exaggerate this gripping of the ball with only two fingers. Do not stick your third and fourth fingers out straight from it as though they would get poisoned if they touch it, but do not apply any pressure with these two digits. The ball goes right over the two fingers and inside of the thumb—not outside—as it leaves the hand.

Now, according to theory, if the arm is brought over exactly vertically with the shoulder as a pivot, and the palm of the hand facing first, the ball should break down. But, with right-handed pitchers, there is always a tendency for it to break away from the batter and, with left-handers, toward him, considering the hitter to be right-handed. By turning the palm over a little so that it is more toward the sky than first base, you will get it to break out more, and you will also get the drop, too, but not so deep a drop. By turning the hand entirely over so that the palm is toward the sky, you get nothing but the plain out-curve with no drop. Against this I have already advised. The point is to acquire a sharp-breaking curve and not one which starts to curve from the time the ball leaves the hand and can

be identified by the batter at once. The sharp break can only be obtained with practice and by following the rules I have laid down. Any boy can throw an out-curve and almost any batter can hit it. Do not practice on this. Get the up and down snap of the wrist, and you have the drop.

In throwing what is called, in the parlance of the Big League, the drop curve, which is the ball I have been talking about that breaks down sharply and away from the batter, better results can be obtained by aiming the ball at the batter and letting it break away from him and over the plate. This curve is obtained in the same way as a drop, except that the hand is turned over slightly, with the palm at an angle about half-way between the sky and the first baseman, with a right-hander. Do not turn it all the way over so that it faces the sky or you will get no drop at all and nothing but the out-curve.

The reason I recommend starting the drop-curve at the batter is because you will have it called a strike, whether he hits at it or not, since it should break over the plate. I never urge a pitcher of mine to aim at the batter deliberately, with the idea of injuring him. It is foolish and dangerous and unsportsmanlike.

46 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

Occasionally, if the batter crowds the plate, it may be well to sail in a fast one close to him to drive him back. But in these lessons I shall not recommend any measures which will put the opponents to unnecessary risk of injuries.

Now, in throwing the curve ball, keep it low and you will get better results. That is, I mean if you start a drop-curve at a batter's waist and let it break so that it crosses the plate about at his knees or just above, you will find it harder for the average batter to hit. You also get a better break to the curve. The explanation of this is that you get more leverage on the ball because, when aimed low, it does not leave your hand as soon as when it is aimed high and you get just that much additional force into it and can get a better snap of the wrist with the longer swing to the arm. Try this and see if it is not true. Therefore, as a general thing, I would advise the youngster to keep the drop low, unless he knows the batter is a natural low ball hitter. Then it would be suicidal to pitch at his strength. The ball must be started so as to break across the batter's shoulders or just below in that case.

Just one more word about the fast ball, and I am through for this lesson. The most effective fast ball has a hop toward the right-handed

batter when delivered by a right hander. In giving examples in these lessons we will take it for granted that both the pitcher and batter are right handed unless I signify otherwise. The reverse of anything I may say for right handers is true for southpaws. But this hop on the fast ball cannot be obtained all the time. Do not be discouraged if you fail to get it at first. Even Big League pitchers lack the hop on their fast one some days. Then we say they have an off day. Nobody knows why they fail to get the jump to it. It is one of the mysteries of baseball. In throwing the fast ball do not give it any spinning motion, and let it slip off the end of the first two fingers with as little friction as possible so that it will sail rather than spin. By trying it, you will find a baseball can also be held so that none of the fingers with which you grip it touch a seam. Remember, those are the first two and the thumb. There is no snap of the wrist in throwing this ball. The overhand pitcher brings his arm straight over from the shoulder and lets it go off the ends of his fingers. The hop is not a curve, but a shoot.

IV

THE PITCHER

The slow ball, the spitter, freak deliveries, and fielding the position

IN discussing pitching under this head, I want to say that the only other important asset which a pitcher can possess outside of those I have gone over in the first two lessons is a slow ball. This gives him the benefit of a change of pace that is valuable in fooling batters, but many great pitchers have served out their Big League careers without ever attaining the slow or "creep" delivery. It is a hard one to get.

The slow ball is obtained with the same motion as the fast one, but it is the result of the manner of delivery. Hold the ball with the first two fingers and thumb, but grip it very loosely, as delicately as you would a thin shelled egg. Take your windup as for speed or a curve, but as you let go of the ball relax your fingers so that they are barely touching it, and

all the impetus which would ordinarily be given the ball by the swing of the arm and the drive of the body is lost because of the relaxed fingers. A good slow ball is hard to get and can be obtained only by the most careful practice and patience.

The first thing to be remembered in connection with the slow ball is that you must not alter your style in delivering it. If you do, the batter is tipped off right away as to what is coming, and the slow ball loses its value, because it is the change of pace from speed to slow one that fools him. If the batter gets a chance to set himself for the ball, he can hit it. He must not be able to time the ball. Let me repeat the prescription for this change of pace or slow ball. Grip it as you would an egg and then let it float out of your hand "dead."

The slow ball should not spin in its journey from the pitcher to the catcher. "Doc" White, the left hander formerly with the Chicago White Sox, was a great master of the slow ball. It is said that his slow one went to the batter without a single revolution, but that instead of describing a simple parabola, as would be expected, it wandered from side to side in an irregular line or drifts. Some pitchers spin the slow ball and get the slow curve by apply-

50 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

ing the same spinning motion and style of delivery to it which result in the ordinary curve ball. To get this slow drop curve let the ball spin over the tops of the first two fingers and inside the thumb, getting the friction from the hold on the seams. For the ordinary slow or drift ball, it should be held without touching the seams, as for the fast one.

A man must use judgment in working the change of pace. He cannot throw up one slow ball after another and expect to get away with it. After letting loose some speed and a curve, he should work in a slow ball, and the batter has swung before he realizes the alteration in the speed if the pitcher has been clever in springing it. What the pitcher wants to do is to make it unexpected—a surprise.

Now for the spitball. When this delivery was discovered a few years ago, the craze for it swept over the country, and many asserted it would revolutionize pitching and put all the old boys, who depended on speed and curves, out of the going. First of all, I want to warn young pitchers against this form of delivery if they can get along without it. The spitball is hard on the arm of most pitchers because it has to be delivered “dead”—that is, without the revolving motion common to the curve. This

requires much wear and tear on the arm, since the deadness is obtained by the application of the spit and jerking the ball out of the hand instead of sliding it out as with the ordinary fast ball. Several seasons ago, it was thought that, in order to throw the spitter, the ball had to be pretty nearly drowned—that is, wet all over its surface. Most spitball pitchers did this, and it had disastrous results because it made the ball hard for the fielders and catcher to handle and resulted in many errors.

Students of the delivery have discovered that the ball will break just as well if only that part of the surface which is touched with the two fingers that are applied to the ball is moistened. "Ed" Walsh, the great spitball pitcher of the Chicago White Sox, wets a place only about as large as a half dollar, and this is of great benefit to the fielders because when the ball is all "messed up" it makes it very hard to handle. In pitching the spitball, grip the ball so that neither the fingers nor the thumb touch a seam, as for the fast one. The friction from the seams gives it the undesired spinning motion and spoils the effect.

For a long time pitchers had great difficulty in controlling the spitball, and many constant users of this delivery cannot tell you now which

way it will break when they throw it. The ball always breaks down (except in rare instances, which, for the present, can be disregarded), but now it will jump toward a right handed batter and again away from him without any apparent rhyme or reason in the method of delivery. Walsh, who is the best example among the spitball pitchers, can tell you which way his ball will break, and he attributes this control to a slight spin he gives the ball as he releases it from his hand. The spitball of most pitchers goes up to the batter "dead"—that is, without any spin, maybe turning over once between the pitcher and the catcher. Walsh's revolves five or six times. Now, when Walsh delivers the ball so that his arm comes straight over with the thumb toward the ground, the ball breaks straight down like a drop curve, only the break is much sharper. When he turns his hand over slightly so that the two fingers are toward third base and the thumb at an angle toward first, the ball will break down and out from a right handed batter. The thumb, in pitching this, is at an angle of about forty-five degrees from the ground. By turning the hand over so that the thumb is toward third and the two fingers toward first at the same angle as before the ball will break

in. Notice the accompanying illustrations.

Now, Walsh has the most peculiar break to his spitter of any exponent of that delivery I ever saw. By turning his hand entirely over so that the two fingers are toward the ground and his thumb toward the sky, he can get a slight and very unusual up jump on the ball when he delivers it with an underhand motion. The reader will see by these explanations that the ball always breaks toward the position of the thumb, and Walsh, himself, attributes this to the slight spin given the ball by the thumb just before he lets go of it (Ills. Nos. 12 and 13).

In talking to young fellows about the spitter, I am getting into higher baseball, and delving into deliveries which are hard to master without active coaching by an expert. The result from a spitter can be obtained by wetting the ball on the spot where the two fingers, with which it is gripped, touch it. Then let the ball go off the ends of the fingers with speed and without friction, as in delivering the fast one, and give the wrist a backward jerk just as the ball leaves the hand. This jerk supplies the ball with its extra speed and lets it shoot out of the hand as out of a sling. But the resultant jolt is hard on the arm.

54 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

The cross-fire is confined largely to tall men because the pitcher using it has to take a long step out of the box to get results. The intention is not to fool the batter by any curve or break on the ball, but by the angle at which it comes at him. Therefore, a cross-fire pitcher must vary the angle constantly. Sallee, the tall pitcher of the St. Louis Nationals, is a splendid example of the cross-fire pitcher. He has the slim build and length of arm and body.

The cross-fire is delivered in the same way as a fast ball. The ball is gripped with the thumb and first two fingers, used in all pitching, but the step and body bring the results. A right hander who uses the cross-fire steps out of the box toward third base with his left foot and shoots the ball from the extreme angle with his right foot just touching the rubber. The batter gets the impression the ball is coming at him and steps back. It may cut the outside corner of the plate. A young ball player is likely to get badly tangled up in delivering this ball if he is not careful. The final position often brings him all out of position to field any hits which may result. It is another style of delivery to avoid. At best, it must be mixed with other deliveries to be effective because

the result is obtained from the unexpected angle and not from the break on the ball.

The fadeaway, of which Christy Mathewson of the Giants is practically the only exponent in baseball, and a delivery likely to die with him when he quits the game, and the "knuckle" or "finger nail" ball come under the head of freak deliveries. It would be foolhardy for a young pitcher to try to perfect these two short of the Big League. If he cares to, there is no harm in attempting these freak deliveries in practice, but they are too hard to control to risk in a game. I have seen Mathewson try time and again to show pitchers in the Big League how to throw the fadeaway, even twirlers on rival clubs, but none, besides him, has ever been able to use it successfully. Some get it but cannot control the ball. Ames can throw it sometimes, and Drucke, formerly of the Giants, got the best results outside of Mathewson, but he never got good enough control to risk its use in a game.

It is easy to tell how to throw the fadeaway. The results are hard to achieve. In delivering an outcurve, the ball is held by a right hander with the two fingers and the thumb, with the thumb pointing toward third base and the palm of the hand held toward the sky. This gives

56 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

the ball a spinning motion when it slips off the end of the thumb with a jerk of the wrist that causes it to break away from a right handed batter. Now, in getting the fadeaway, the ball is held in just the same manner as for an outcurve, but the hand is turned over so that the palm is toward the ground instead of the sky, putting the hand in an awkward position. Then the ball is released off the end of the thumb with the snap of the wrist characteristic of the outcurve, only the hand is jerked toward third base instead of first as with the outcurve. The result is a slow incurve toward a right-handed batter, a very valuable thing if properly used.

Two things make this ball difficult to deliver. One is the unnatural position of the hand, with the palm toward the ground. This means that, in getting the final jerk, you get it away from the body instead of toward it, as in other curves. The other hard thing about it is just that jerk. Pitchers do not seem to be able to get it right and control the ball at the same time—only Mathewson, and he says it took months of patient work to accomplish it. He uses it for a slow ball because, necessitating that difficult snap of the wrist, it cannot be thrown fast. The ball comes up to the

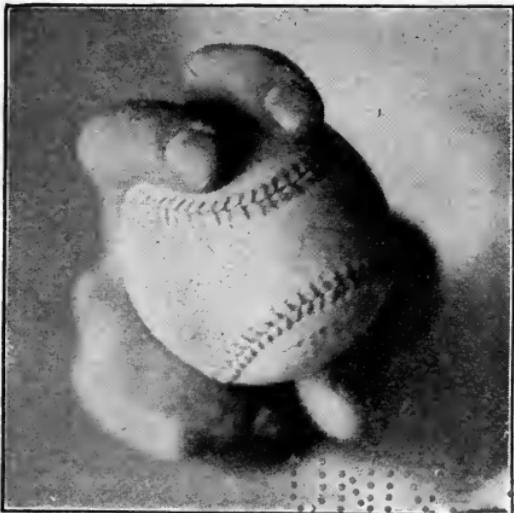


Illustration No. 13—How Walsh holds his spitball. Held as in the photograph to the left, it will break "in." Held as in the photograph on the right, it will break "up." In no hold that is taken on the spitball do the fingers and thumb touch seams.

Illustration No. 14—The Knuckle Ball.



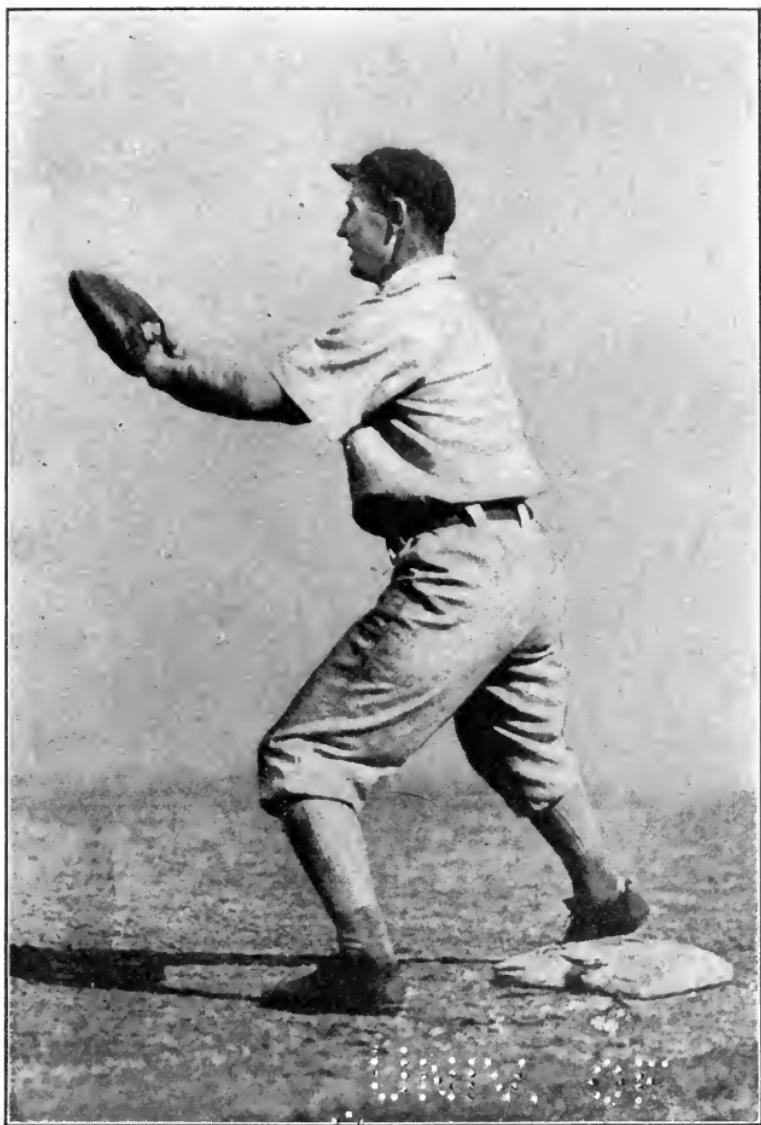


Illustration No. 15—Frank Chance covering first. Note that he has given the runner room to cross the bag. Correct form.

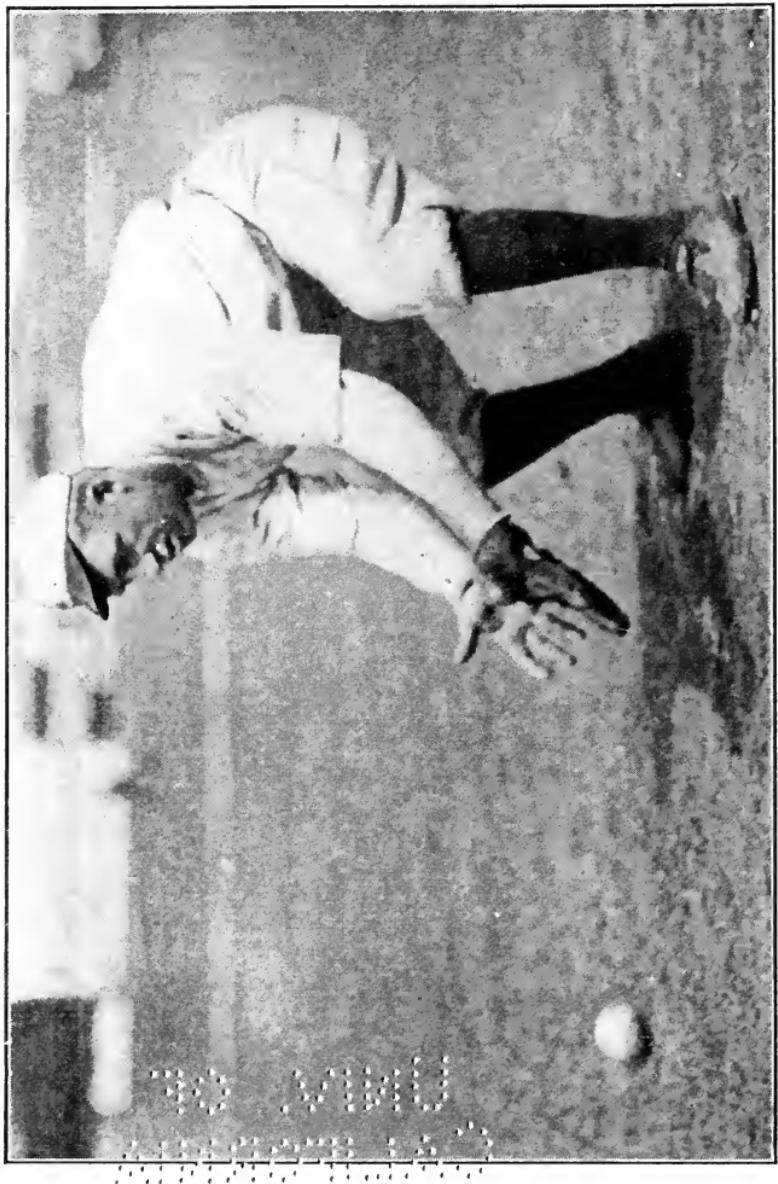


Illustration No. 16—The proper and natural way to field a ground ball. The position is not strained as when the knees and heels are kept together.

batter lazily and falls down and toward him after seeming to pause for a moment in front of him. It is a remarkable and very deceptive curve.

Much has been written and said of the "knuckle" or "finger nail" ball. It is one of the hardest to pitch and has been mastered by very few twirlers. The preliminary position of the hand in delivering it is as for the straight ball, gripping it with the two fingers and the thumb. But, as the arm is drawn back, the two fingers are cocked on the ball as though you were going to flick off a piece of paper. (Illustration No. 14.) Then, as the ball is let go, the fingers are snapped out straight, which causes the ball to sail up to the batter "dead" and act very much the same as the spit-ball does. The peculiar snap of the fingers as the ball is let go at the full swing of the arm does this and gives it the "dead" set. The ball breaks down. I would not advise any one to try this. The fingers do not touch the seams in pitching this ball.

That about clears up the freak deliveries. But there is a lot of good pitching besides throwing the ball. Fielding is very important. A pitcher who cannot field his position is very nearly helpless because the opposing side will

58 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

start to bunt the ball and beat him sure. Only practice will accomplish good fielding. I take my young pitchers in the Spring and send the practice batters up to the plate with orders to do nothing but bunt. This gives them a chance to learn how to lay the ball down, and shows the pitchers how to field it. A pitcher, in handling bunts, must work in conjunction with the first and third basemen and not mix up the plays. If the ball goes toward third, let him yell at the third baseman to get it, if he sees that this man can field the ball, and keep out of his way. When the pitcher is expecting a bunt, he should follow the pitch through and take a step or two toward the plate after he delivers the ball and stand poised on his toes ready to field the bunt fast. Do not approach too close to the batter because, if he drives the ball, you are liable to be hurt.

The pitcher must learn to back up throws and cover first base. On a hit toward the first baseman between first and second, the pitcher should run over and cover the bag so that he can take the throw and give the first baseman a chance to field the ball. The pitcher should also cover first on slow hits down the first base line which the first baseman must field. If the pitcher will cover first base, he will find that

his first baseman can cover ground like a short-stop and knock down a lot of hits for him that would get away otherwise. A first baseman must get to depend upon his pitcher to cover so that he can go after balls with confidence. The pitcher should start as soon as he sees that the ball is hit toward first base so as to get to the bag in time, and yell: "I'll cover the bag." Then the play is not balled up.

In addition to fielding, the pitcher must learn to back up on certain plays. On a throw to third base from the outfield, the pitcher should be over behind the bag. Many a game has been lost because the ball gets by a third baseman on a bad bound and there is no one behind to back up. The runner is sure to score. The pitcher should also back up the plate on throws home. If the ball gets by the catcher, this backing up prevents runners on the bases advancing or the possibility of the man who has stopped on third base scoring. This backing up of plays is important and will save close games day after day. Do not be lazy about it. Because it was unnecessary twice, do not refuse to back up the third time.

A pitcher cannot be too careful with his catcher in arranging the signs. As I said in the lesson on catching, there should be two or

60 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

three sets so that, if it is thought the other club is getting your signals, you can switch to another set. Sometimes the pitcher gives the signs himself by nodding his head, and then the catcher always gives fake signals, intended to throw off the other side.

Be careful never to cross your catcher. What I mean by this is, that if he signs you for a fast ball and you approve of it, do not hand him a curve. He is not looking for it, and the ball may get away from him. Passed balls are one of the most costly things in baseball, and the pitcher is quite as often to blame for them as the catcher because he crosses his receiver. Be sure that you have received the sign the catcher is giving, and then deliver the sort of ball he asks for. If you disagree with him in his judgment, shake your head, no, and make him change his sign. But never cross him and be sure that you have his signal right before you pitch.

Judging the batters is another branch of the pitching art. By judging batters, I mean studying them to get at their weaknesses. When you first look at a man's position at the plate and his manner of holding the bat, you can get a line on the kind of balls he likes and those he dislikes. If he stands far away from

the plate, he probably likes balls on the inside, and the thing to do then is to keep the ball on the outside of the plate so that he cannot reach it. If a man crowds the plate drive him back and then keep the ball on the inside. He likes them on the outside.

Some men are natural curve ball hitters. If a player uppercuts the ball, you can be sure he likes them low and can hit curves. By uppercutting the ball, I mean he pulls his bat up when he swings, starting it low rather than pushing down on the ball. Sherwood Magee, the great hitter of the Philadelphia Club, is this type of batsman. You want to pitch high to such a man. If you find a young batsman pulling away from the plate, drive him back first by scaring him with a close one and then keep the ball on the outside of the plate.

Always try to outguess the batter by giving him the delivery he is not expecting. Mix them up as much as possible, but try to keep him in the hole rather than yourself. By keeping him in the hole, I mean get more strikes than balls on him. If you do get into the hole,—that is, with three balls and no strikes or one strike on the batter—do not try to put over a curve unless you have excellent control of it. And even in this situation I would not advise cut-

62 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

ting the heart of the plate with the ball because it is better to walk a man than to lay the ball where he can drive it for two or three bases. Try to keep the ball on the plate, but over the edges, where he cannot hit it well. You must use your judgment in each particular instance. Whenever you notice a weakness in a man, put it down in your mind and use your knowledge against him. If you expect a batter to bunt, keep the ball high. It is hard to bunt a high one. To acquire the art of judging batters, a pitcher must learn much of what he uses through actual experience.

V

FIRST BASE

SO far we have been considering the men on a ball club who are pillars of strength on the defence, and in whom speed is not essential—the pitcher and the catcher. But now I come to discuss the infielders and outfielders, in both places fast men being far superior to slow ones. Good batsmen are also desirable both in the infield and out, but particularly in the outfield.

The successful infielder must be fast on his feet and a quick thinker. He must be in touch with the game all the time and keep a close eye on both the catcher and the other infielders for signs. His work fits into the infield as a cog into a machine. If he fails to perform his share, the whole machine falls apart.

Personally, I like fairly big men to cover first base, although the old theory that a man must be six feet high to get away with it has long since been dissipated.

The man who covers the initial bag has to

64 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

do as much thinking as any player in the infield, for numerous plays revolve around him in every game that may cost the victory. Of course, the routine work of playing the bag is easy enough if he can catch a thrown ball. I am going to take it for granted that the candidate for the job knows how to do this. He should always let his hands give with the ball and try to swing them toward the natural position for throwing so that he is ready to make a play to any other bag or the home plate if there are other runners on the bases. The expert first baseman soon learns how to shift his body so as to receive the ball on his right side, if he is a right hander, and vice versa if a southpaw, to be prepared for throwing, but still getting his body slightly behind the ball so as to block it if it goes through his hands. By letting his hands give with the ball when he receives it, he does not stand so much chance of muffing it because, if the ball hits his hands when his arms are stiff, it is almost sure to bounce out of his hands. It is also liable to bruise his hands and thus prevent him from being of much use to his club for some time.

The great difficulty about playing first base is the position in covering the bag so as not to interfere with the runner and still get thrown

balls from all sides of the base. This requires the footwork of a boxer. The first baseman must also be able to handle high and low throws with a certain amount of dexterity because the infielders uncork a lot of bad throws in their anxiety to get the ball away in a hurry. The only way for the first baseman to become expert in the mechanical end of the game is through practice. By the mechanical end, I mean handling thrown balls. He can get this practice by hanging around an infield, when batting practice is going on or when some one is hitting them out for practice, and playing the bag for the other infielders to throw at him. He should attempt to take every ball on the fly that he can without pulling himself off the bag to do it. Of course, a first baseman who pulls his foot off the base is of no use because he loses his put-out as soon as he does this and concedes the play at once.

In receiving pickups, the results are obtained through knack acquired by practice. It is the ability to judge a bounce, and you should shove your hands at the ball and up in the same movement. Keep your legs together as much as possible so as to prevent the ball going through you if you miss it on the pickup, but do not cramp yourself to accomplish this. That

66 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

is the mistake many coaches make in instructing young ball players. They make them keep their legs together on all ground hits, and they tie themselves up into such awkward knots as a result that they have not a chance to field the ball. There is one thing for a first baseman to remember through all his work, and that is he must keep his foot on the bag. If he can do this and block the ball at the same time, then he has accomplished just that much more.

The foot work of a first baseman is extremely important. He must be shifty on his feet and move about rapidly in covering the base. There is one cast iron rule about receiving throws which is never to be disregarded except in extreme emergencies. That is to play the bag on the inside, or toward the pitcher, when receiving throws from the infielders. This position has numerous advantages. In the first place, by assuming it you cut down the distance the infielders must throw the ball, and if the decision on the runner at first base is close, you may get it by the reach from the inside of the bag. When you play from behind the bag in covering, you will find yourself blocking the runner and will receive some hard bumps. Besides that, you are very likely to lose the ball as a result of the collision and may

give the runner an extra base if the ball rolls very far.

You will observe that none of the good first basemen ever collide with the base runner. The runner is entitled to the bag, and you should give it to him by playing it from the inside whenever possible. (Ill. No. 15.) I mean you should run in from the position where you are standing toward right field when the ball is hit and touch the bag with the heel of your left foot, with your right foot extended toward second and facing the infielder who has received the ball. This gives him a target at which to throw. If you see that the ball is going to arrive on the other side of the bag out of reach from your first position, shift over, touching the other corner of the base with your right heel and with your left foot in foul territory. Always try to avoid collisions.

In the first position I mentioned, the runner has plenty of room to pass behind you or to cross the bag between you and the foul line. In the second, he has an opportunity to pass over the base inside of you toward the infield. You will find yourself a very much more successful and a healthier first baseman if you give the runners a chance at the bag. If you have to go up in the air after a ball, jump to

68 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

land on the inside corner of the bag and not in the path of the base runner. By practice, you soon learn to shift your position so as not to block.

When there is no runner on first base, the first baseman stands about sixteen feet off the bag and about twenty feet behind the first base line out toward right field, unless there is a man on third and the play is likely to be at the plate. Of course, a fast man can take more ground away from the bag and thus cover more territory than the slower one, but I should say that twenty feet is about the normal distance. He must be able to get in and cover the bag in time to receive a thrown ball.

If the ball is hit at him, let him field it and run to the base and touch the bag if possible. Every time a ball is thrown in a ball game there is a chance of a bad throw or a muff taken, so that if the first baseman can beat the runner to the bag with the ball, he is just that much surer of getting his man. However, he should learn to work with his pitcher on hits of this kind. If he will insist that the pitcher run over and cover the bag, he will find he can spread himself over a great deal of ground. Every time that a ball is hit toward the first baseman, the pitcher should run over to cover

in case it is necessary. In order to accomplish this, the pitcher should start as soon as he sees the ball is hit at the first baseman. Then, if his services are not needed, he can slow up just before he reaches the bag so as not to interfere, because the good first baseman will say: "I've got the bag."

But when the hit is so deep that a throw must be made to the pitcher, the first baseman cannot afford to get excited. This is one of the hardest plays in baseball to make successfully, anyway, because he must time his throw to cross the bag just as the pitcher, who is running at it, does, and the pitcher must avoid collision with the base runner, which is liable to follow because their paths cross at the bag. The first baseman should not shoot the ball or throw it hard at the pitcher, and he should not deliver it until the twirler has almost reached the base. Then let him toss it at the bag and not at the running man, underhand preferably.

After a man gets on the base, the position of the first baseman changes. He must be in there to hold the runner close to the bag to prevent him from getting a good start in stealing. With a man on the base, he stands inside the diamond with the heel of his left foot on the

70 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

bag and his right extended out toward second base. The first baseman should be ready to receive a throw from the pitcher at any time, and no signal is necessary for this play. In trying to touch the runner, sweep your arm through and tag with the same motion you make in catching the ball. But be careful the ball is surely in your hands before you try to put it on the runner. Many men attempt to touch a man before they have the ball. Always try to touch him every time you receive the ball.

Never dab at a man more than once unless you know you have missed him the first time and see that he is still plainly off the base. By taking a second stab at a base runner, you admit you did not touch him the first time, and maybe the umpire thought you did and would have called him out. In covering the base to receive a thrown ball from the infield after the batter has hit it, always face the man who is going to deliver it. Be sure that you have your foot on the bag. This sounds like foolish advice, but it is very often necessary even after men get up high enough for a Big League trial. In their anxiety to get the throw, they forget to keep their foot on the bag. And do not take your foot off until after you have

received the ball. This is a habit of many ball players and has cost lots of decisions.

When there is a man on first base, as soon as the pitcher starts to deliver the ball to the batter, the first baseman should run down the base line and back behind it a little to cover more ground. Of course, the base runner will take a lead off the bag with the drawing back of the pitcher's arm to deliver the ball and many times he will try to fool you into believing that he is going to steal when he only wants to draw a throw. Watch him, and if you see he is really going, shout: "There he goes."

Frequently, this flash will get to the pitcher before he delivers the ball and he can serve up a pitchout so that the catcher will have a better chance of getting the runner at second base.

But in some respects it is a dangerous course because the coacher at first base will endeavor to imitate your voice and shout: "There he goes!"

Of course, the batter has no intention of trying to steal, but the coacher at first base, by his sudden shout, has fooled the pitcher and he cuts loose a pitchout which gets him into the hole with the batter. Therefore, if you intend to attempt this warning, be sure to arrange with the pitcher beforehand to put some little

72 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

cue on it. For instance, tell him that you will shout "There he goes now." The "now" will be the catchword. The coacher will not notice this, and yell only, "There he goes," in trying to imitate you. If the coacher gets wise to it, shift to another word, as "There he goes down," "down" being the catchword. Never shout the sign to the pitcher unless you are sure the base runner is really going to try to steal. You only make trouble for the pitcher then.

The play of a first baseman becomes more complicated as soon as men get on the bases. If the score is close and a man is on third base with less than two out, the entire infield moves in toward the plate so as to make the play to the plate and cut off the run. If there is a man on first as well as third on this play and one is out, I would recommend having the infield play back and try for a double play. In this way, the infielders are able to cover lots more ground, and I believe that a double play is successful oftener than one to the plate to get the runner.

With a man on first and second bases and the score close so that you expect a sacrifice, the first baseman should play well down the base line, probably about twenty feet toward the plate. Then he can make the play to third



Illustration No. 17—Proper position for covering second to get a man out stealing.

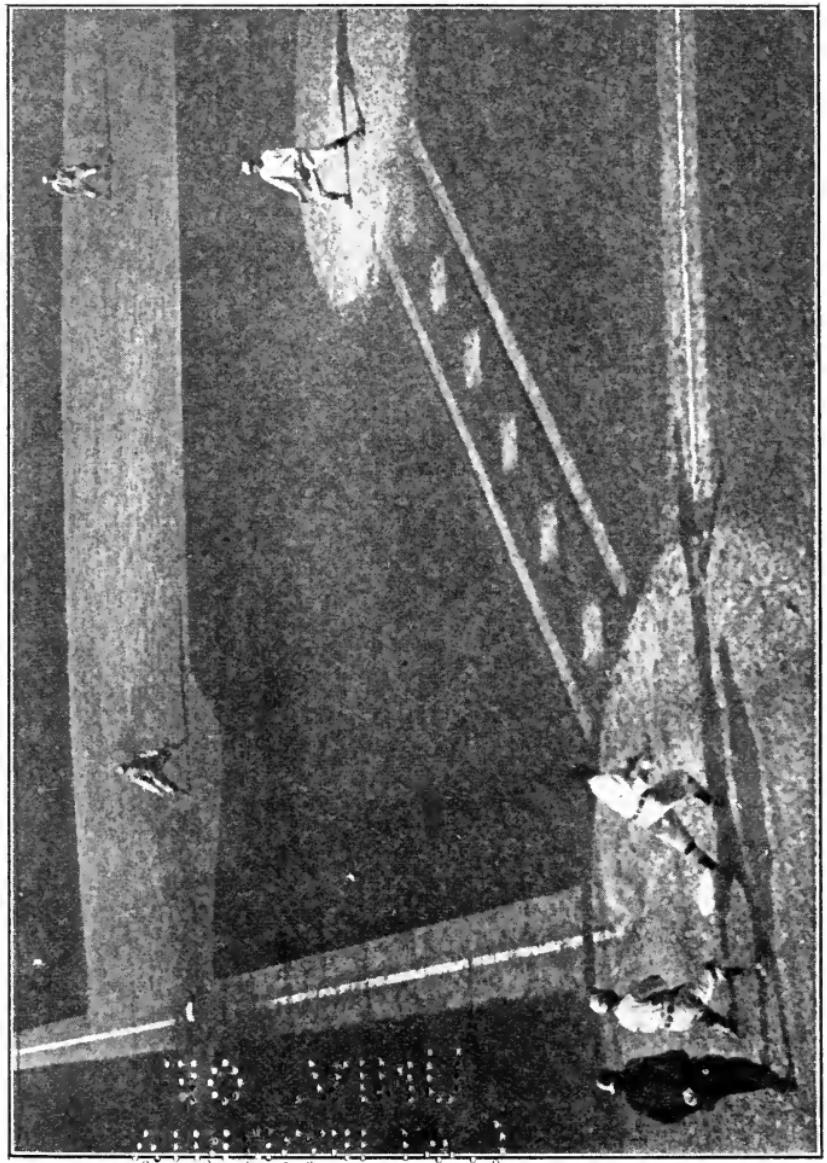


Illustration No. 20—This picture shows the proper fielding positions of the shortstop and third baseman when no one is on the bases.

base, forcing the man there, and thus getting the runner nearer to the plate. In this case the second baseman covers the first bag. He moves over toward first before the pitch until he is about halfway between first and second bases, and runs right down to cover the bag if he sees that the batter has laid the ball down. The first baseman edges in a few steps closer on the pitch if anything, but I want to warn a man about getting too close to the hitter because a clever batter will cross you and drive the ball at you. A line drive at that range is dangerous, so, if you cannot handle it, be ready to duck quick. And do not make the play to third base unless you see you have a good chance to get the runner. If the man on second is speedy and is only a few feet from third by the time you have fielded the ball, do not throw. Remember there is still the natural play left. Either touch the runner going to first base, if you yet have time, or whirl and throw to first, where the second baseman is covering. It is hard to get a fast man going to third base on this play. Never throw unless you are sure of nailing him. A wild throw will cost a run.

As you will see, when you read the article on Team Work, the first baseman must have

74 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

a set of signs with the catcher and other infielders. The object of the signs with the catcher is for the first baseman to know when the catcher intends to throw down to nip a base runner napping. It is best for the first baseman to give this sign to the catcher, but let him get some answer confirming it so he will know that the catcher is prepared. Suppose he thinks a base runner is taking too large a lead off with the pitch. While the pitcher has the ball in the box after the catcher has given his signs to him, he should take a look around the infield to see that the men are playing all right. Then the first baseman should flash a sign meaning he will cover as soon as the catcher gets the ball. This sign must be some simple and commonplace action which will not be detected by the opponents. For instance, the first baseman can hike up his trousers, but he must remember never to do this unconsciously when he does not mean it. The catcher, to acknowledge the receipt of the sign, reaches down and pats his glove in the dirt. Then the first baseman immediately runs back to the bag behind the baserunner to receive a throw from the catcher, having made only a bluff at leaving it to fool the base runner. The catcher throws the ball as soon as he receives it because

the play depends on the speed of its execution for its success. The first baseman must be there to cover and must tag the runner quickly.

Many managers advocate the first baseman and the other infielders blocking the base line on a long hit to slow up the runner in taking the turns and give the outfielders more time. I do not urge any of my players to take an unfair advantage, but each one should assume the position at the bag to which he is entitled by the rules. For instance, the first baseman can stand at the inside corner of the bag to make sure the runner takes his turn instead of cutting just the corner of the base as he would if the first baseman had not stood there. Each man should watch to see that the runner touches every bag, too, and, if he does not, call the umpire's attention to it at once. Do not stand on the bag and block the runner altogether, because it is against the rules in the first place, and, in the second place, if you could get away with it the members of the other club would only be after you. There is no use in making yourself trouble. Simply stand on the inside of the bag and make the runner go around you. It may save a three-base hit or a home run.

VI

SECOND BASE

THE position of second base is one of the most important on a ball club because it is the keystone position of the whole infield. The second baseman holds the infield together and, therefore, he must be brainy. He also must be courageous because he encounters many tough plays when runners come sliding into the bag.

The second baseman may be slower of foot than the shortstop or third baseman, and his arm may be weaker than those of his two fellow infielders because his plays to first base are not as hurried as those from the other side of the diamond as a rule. Lajoie and "Johnny" Evers are examples of this. Neither one has a throwing arm of exceptional strength, but they are two of the best second basemen in the game. The second baseman is supposed to be a better batter than the shortstop or third baseman because speed and a good whip are required of

the latter two, while they are not essential to a second baseman.

I would advise any young fellow who is a good hitter and who is sure on ground balls, but who has a weak wing, to try to become a second baseman.

The good second baseman should be able to go either way after ground balls. Many players have a weakness on one side—that is, they cannot field the ball well on either their right or left side and this is a great handicap to the second baseman because he receives about as many chances on one side as the other. I should say that such a fault would be fatal to the success of a man in any company that boasted of even medium class. The only way to break himself of this weakness is to practice constantly in fielding balls on the weak side. The one thing to remember is always to play the ball and never let it play you.

Letting the ball play you is responsible for most of the infield errors on teams short of the Big Leagues and for a few in the major organizations. Make up your mind how you are going to take a ground hit, as soon as you see it coming, and then go after it with determination. If you hesitate, you are gone, because then the ball plays you. It is very bad

78 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

form ever to back up on a ball because you will almost invariably get it on a bad bound, and it will play you. You are going with the ball then instead of against it. If the ball is hit slowly, go in on it and have confidence in yourself. Decision is what counts. The reason so many youngsters fail to handle ground balls cleanly is because they wait to make up their minds how to take them and are backing up on the ball instead of going toward it. This is a bad flaw, since, besides making the ball harder to field if you do get it, you are put all off your balance for the throw by your awkward position.

Play a ground ball close to the ground and do not keep your legs together unless you have a chance to set yourself for it. (Ill. No. 16.) Keeping the legs together used to be a rule of the game, but I believe it cramps up a man more than it benefits him. It makes his work awkward instead of graceful, and he loses lots of chances on which he might make clean plays if he had gone after the ball naturally. The great secret of getting a ground ball is to be going to meet it with your body and hands rather than pulling away from it. Then you are steadier on your feet and in a better position to throw. A second baseman must be

able to snap the ball from any position because he receives so many balls that he just gets on the run and has not the time to straighten up and set himself for the throw.

Bear this in mind. Whenever you have the time, take it, of course. If you have made a clean pickup on a smartly hit ball, do not shoot it at the first baseman from any old angle and take a chance on him getting it. Straighten up and set yourself for the throw.

The second baseman's normal position is a little nearer second than first and back of the base line almost at right angles to the point where a line drawn from the home plate to center field would cut second base. The second baseman is supposed to cover more territory than any other infielder and will be frequently called upon to go out into short right field for flies or to come in on slow ground hits. If the second baseman will play deep, he will permit the right fielder to cover more ground because the latter can play his position deeper.

The second baseman is in a position to observe the signs that the catcher is giving the pitcher and should play the batter according to these. For instance, if he sees that the pitcher is going to give a right handed batter a curve

80 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

ball on the outside corner, he will shift his position over slightly toward first base because the hitter will probably prod such a pitch, if he hits it, toward right field. Doyle, the second baseman on the Giants, passes this sign along to the outfielders by some simple motion such as putting his right hand on his right knee, while the gloved one is not touching his body, and they shift a little bit toward right, but not until the pitcher has delivered the ball, because that might tip the sign off to the opposing batsman. If the batsman should see all the outfielders starting toward right field, he would naturally expect a pitch on the outside of the plate.

When the fielders have taken a step or two after the pitcher lets go of the ball, they should stop before the batter hits it because he may punch it to the other side of them and then they would be caught off their balance and going the wrong way.

The second baseman must have a series of signs with the shortstop about covering the bag when a runner is on first and likely to steal. If one of these men covered the bag continually, the result would be that the base runners would know who to watch, and there would be more stolen bases. But, by alternating, the runners are often caught off their guards. It is simple

to arrange these signs. They must always be some natural movement which the other team will not detect because of its apparent naturalness. Let one of the two men, the shortstop or second baseman, give the sign. On my club, Doyle, the second baseman, gives the signal as to which shall cover. Always be sure that the shortstop gets the signal, so he will not ball up the play.

In preparing to play the bag for the reception of a base runner, move over slightly closer to the base so that you will not have to start toward it in earnest until after the catcher has caught the ball. If you start before this, you leave a big gap at your position through which the batter can drive the ball in case he hits it. Remember the catcher is playing the ball to the bag and not to you. Cover on the run, and slightly behind the line, so the runner must slide in front of you. (Ill. No. 17.) If he tries to get behind you he is blocked off by this position. By standing behind the base line, you can also see what you are doing and avoid much of the danger of being spiked. The base runner then has the path, and there is no reason for him to slide into you unless he deliberately intends to cut you down.

In touching a man, put the ball onto him

82 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

quick, but be sure that you have a good hold on it because many a runner will attempt to knock it out of your hands. This whole play depends upon courage and speed. Do not let the base runner rattle you by threats. You will meet many men who will shout as they slide: "Get out of my way or I will cut you down!"

If you believe he really intends to nick you with his spikes, do not hesitate about putting the ball onto him hard, and a base runner has many vulnerable spots exposed when he is sliding in. That ought to scare him. In making this play, keep clear of the spikes by playing just back of the line. He cannot slide by in front of you out of reach, and he cannot then get behind you.

When you have given the sign to the short-stop to take the throw, if you are the source of the signals, go behind second and back him up in case of a bad throw from the catcher or in case he misses the ball. He will be doing the same thing when you cover the bag. The sign, as I have said, should be simple. Suppose you pull up your right stocking when you want him to cover and your left when you intend to cover yourself. If you think the other team is getting on to your signs, switch them between

innings by a conference on the bench, but be sure they are understood by all hands.

If an infield ball is not hit at the second baseman, he should back up the first sacker on throws from the other infielders, and he will save many extra bases by it in the course of the season. (Ill. No. 18.) Some men inclined to be lazy will go over behind the first baseman once or twice, and, finding that the throws are perfect or that the first baseman successfully stopped all those aimed at him, will abandon the practice as useless, and maybe the next one will get by and the runner reach third base.

Second base is the pivot of most of the double plays made in a ball game. The second baseman takes part in nearly all of these plays. This is an important feature of his work. First, he must figure on the batter. Always remember who is at the plate for the other side if it is a team that you have played before and know the ability of the batters. When a fast man is at the plate and hits into a possible double play, you must hurry it to get him at first base. But when you know that the batter is a slow runner, do not make your play at second so fast that you risk a bad throw and lose both outs. Always make sure of the first play before you attempt the other. If the ball

84 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

is hit to you, and you are close to the bag, do not shoot it at the shortstop. He is liable to miss it. Toss it. (Ill. No. 19.) Receiving a throw from the shortstop or third baseman for a double play, make sure that you touch the bag before you throw the ball to first base.

In covering the bag when a man is attempting to steal, the shortstop takes the throw quite as often as the second baseman. On this play it is optional who shall cover so long as it has been arranged previously by a signal. But on other hits, as a general thing, the shortstop covers on all drives to left field so that the second baseman can back him up and be insurance against a possible wild throw. The second baseman covers on hits to right field and the shortstop backs up. This system is universally followed. The play of the second baseman is so closely connected with that of the shortstop that the two men should practice together continually so as to become accustomed to the habits and mannerisms of each other. It is an invariable rule that whichever man is not covering second base should back up the play.

The second baseman covers first base on one play, to which I referred in the chapter on the first baseman—that is, when there are runners on first and second bases, and a bunt is ex-

pected. The first baseman then moves in to make the play to third, if possible, preparing to force out the runner on second there, and the second baseman takes his position down the base line about half way between first and second. On a bunt, he then covers the bag so that if it is too late to throw the ball to third, he is on first to receive the throw to retire the runner.

I am not going to take up the double steal in this lesson, as it involves three or four players and more properly comes under the subsequent title of "Team Work."

The second baseman plays deep except when there is a man on third base and the score close. Then he moves about ten feet inside the base line so he can make the play home. There is no time to be lost in trying to get a man at the plate on a ground hit to the second baseman. Drive the ball at the catcher so that it arrives about a foot above the ground and two or three feet down the base line toward third. Steady yourself if possible before making the throw because a wild one is bound to result in a run.

VII

SHORTSTOP

THE work of a shortstop on a baseball team dovetails so closely with that of the second baseman it is almost impossible to consider one without taking into account the duties of the other. Yet there are many qualities required of the shortstop which the second baseman can lack and still succeed.

In the first place, the shortstop handles more chances than any of the other infielders, according to the figures. He averages about eight a game for the season in the Big Leagues, while the third baseman averages only about four or five. Both the shortstop and third baseman must be level headed and sure on signs. The shortstop should learn to get an answer when he gives a signal. That is a rule which applies to all players. He is as much a key to the infield as the second baseman, and he has as much covering of the middle bag to do.

In naming the qualifications of a shortstop,

there are three which stick out most prominently. He must be brainy, have a good arm, and be fast on his feet. A boy who lacks any of these should not try to mold himself into a shortstop unless he thinks he can develop them.

Because of the absolutely necessary and accurate fielding qualities required of a shortstop, he does not have to be a great hitter. A fair batter can get away with it nowadays if he is fast enough in the field and on the bases. This strength offsets the batting weakness, and speed in a shortstop is more essential than hitting ability because he is the balance wheel of the infield and the steadier in the team work.

The shortstop must work with the catcher and other infielders on signs. There are several things required of an advanced shortstop which would not be necessary in a man unless he were a minor leaguer with Big League ambitions. The Big League shortstop watches the signs of the catcher closely to discover what kind of a ball the pitcher intends to deliver, because a batter does not pull a fast ball like he does a curve. If the catcher signs for a fast ball, the shortstop should shift toward second base a few feet, but there is a mistake, which many men make about this shifting, that

88 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

is fatal to the success of the team. A batter is more apt to drive a fast ball toward right field than left, and therefore the shortstop wants to be nearer second than third on the sign for this, but he must not move before the twirler starts to deliver the ball because if he does he will tip the batter off.

The shortstop should not start to move until the pitcher begins his motion. Then the batter cannot take his eyes off the twirler. He does not have to shift far, just a few feet, and he should be steady on his feet, ready to move either way by the time the ball reaches the batter. There is a lot of skill in shifting cleverly, and the shortstop must be careful not to tip off the other side by his movements.

When in his natural position with no runners on the bases, the shortstop plays deep, almost at right angles to an imaginary line drawn from home plate over second base to center field. (Ill. No. 20.) His position is slightly nearer second base than third, but he has no set place, as he shifts according to conditions. The shortstop covers second base quite as often as the second baseman. It used to be that he took care of second on all throws, but that system is bad because then the runner knows from just where to expect the danger.

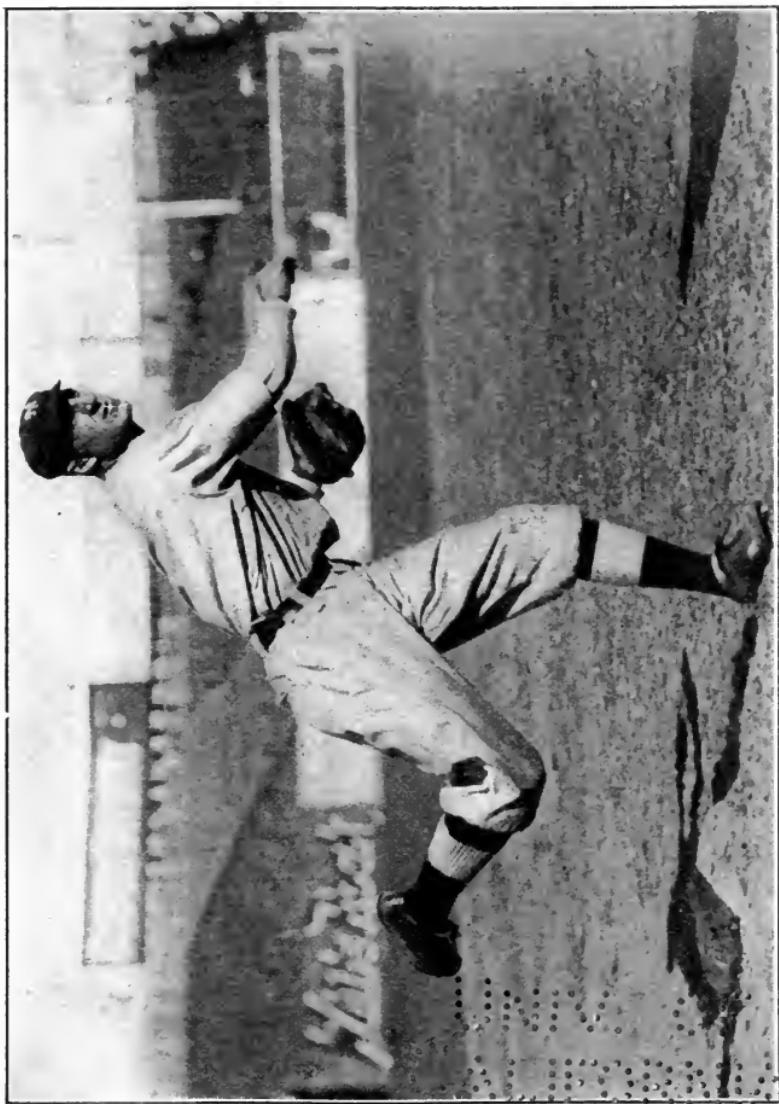


Illustration No. 21—Herzog of the Giants making a throw. Notice that he has his body behind it to make the ball carry.

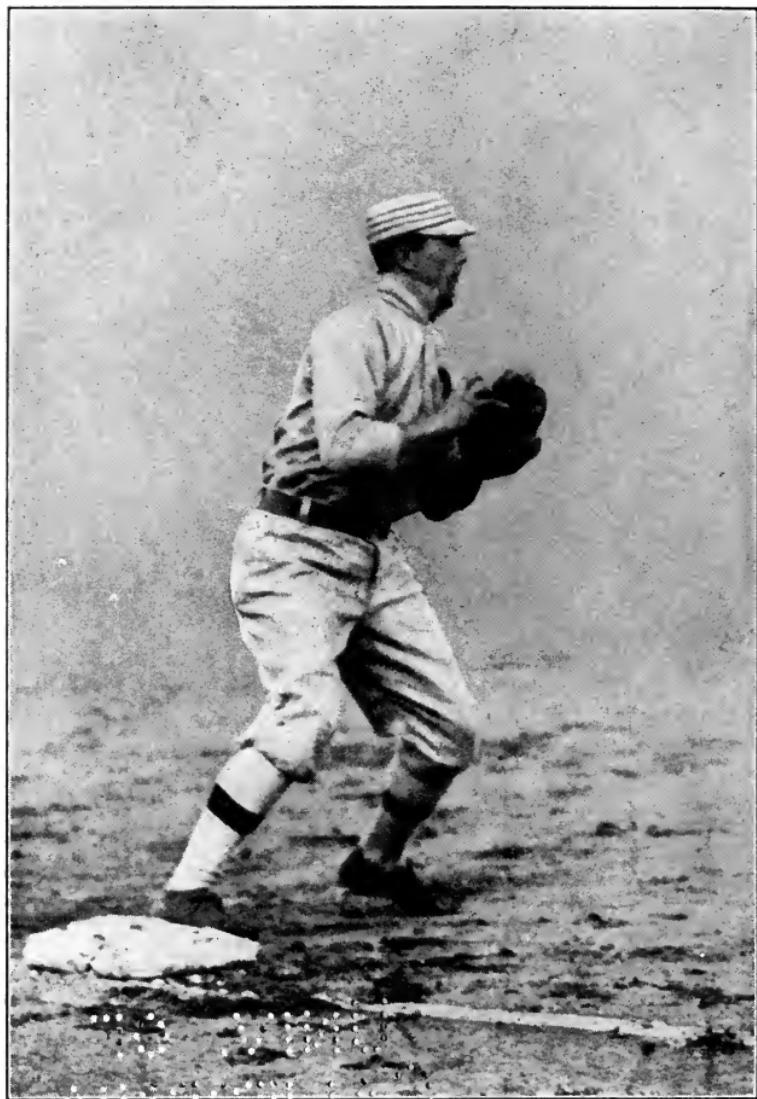


Illustration No. 22—Baker of the Athletics covering third, ready to put a man out. The runner must pass in front of him. Good form.

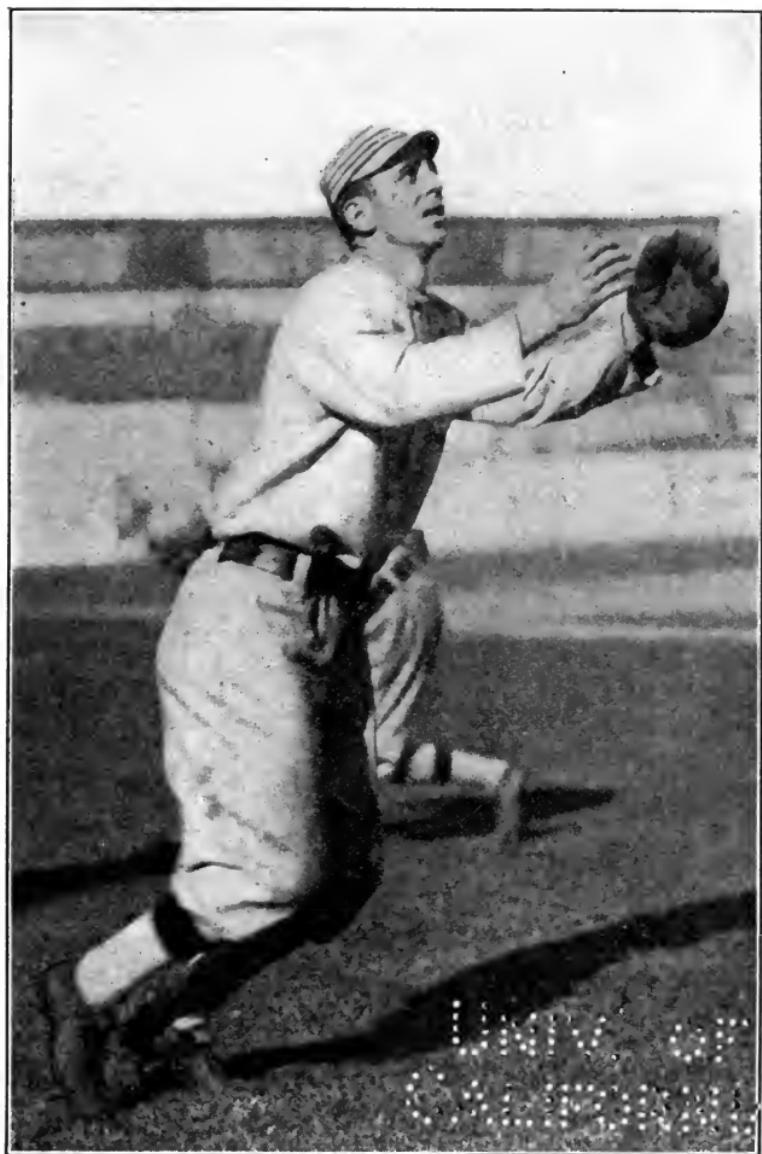


Illustration No. 23—The proper way to catch a fly ball. This man is planted directly under it ready to make the catch.



Illustration No. 24—"Artie" Hofman, the Pittsburgh outfielder, jumping for a high one. Taking the ball with one hand should be done only when there is no chance to use two.

A good shortstop must possess unlimited grit. He must take chances of getting hurt, more chances than any one else on the team with the possible exception of the catcher and third baseman.

In covering second to get a man stealing, the shortstop should not start too soon. If he does, he leaves a big gap at his position through which the hitter can drive the ball. It is not possible for a man to wait until the catcher has the ball to start to cover the bag, because the ordinary shortstop cannot get there in time in this way, but I want to impress upon all my readers that the shortstop is not expected to run over and anchor himself on the bag as soon as he sees the man beginning to streak. He should cover on the run and bear in mind that the catcher is throwing at the bag and not at him. In covering, run over directly behind the base and put the ball on the man fast. That is the weakness of many basemen. They are slow about touching a runner. Do not be afraid to tag a man so that he knows he has been touched. Watch his slide, because he will try to get around you and hook the base. That is what I teach my players. Do not block him off with your body any more than you can help, but cover from the first base side of the bag—

90 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

that is, stand two or three feet down the line on that side of the base—and make the man go in front of you. Then you are not exposed to spikes as much and the runner cannot slip in behind you where it is impossible to see him. You can touch a man quicker if the play is directly in front of you.

Don't be afraid of spikes, but do not take unnecessary risks.

On the mechanical playing of the position of shortstop, there is little to be said. The player must be as proficient on ground balls as any of the other infielders and nimbler. He must take bigger chances of making errors for the reason that he gets harder balls to handle. He cannot afford to fumble for a second because the runner will then beat out his throw. He is much further from first base than the second sacker.

The primary object of a shortstop is to cover as much ground as possible, and to accomplish this he should study batters. By watching your opponents hit, you can tell whether a certain man is inclined to drive the ball toward second or third, whether he naturally swings early or late at the ball. Prepare for this hitting inclination of a batter. Figure on his speed. If he is a very fast man, do not play

so deep, because he will beat out a slow hit then even if you do your work perfectly. Play close to the ground and always be on your toes ready to take a start in any direction.

With men on the bases, the duties of the shortstop become more arduous. If a runner reaches second base, worry him as much as possible without leaving an opening for the batter to hit through you. Play behind him when he takes his lead, and run in to cover the bag every now and then so that the runner will be kept upon his toes. It is important that a man on second be held up, in order to prevent him scoring on a one-base hit if possible.

You should have a set of signs arranged with the catcher which will tell you when the pitcher is going to whirl and throw to get a man too far off second. The catcher should have one signal for the shortstop to cover and another for the second baseman on this play. When you see the catcher give this signal, be sure to get to the bag because the pitcher is going to whirl and throw without looking, and it will give you a bad showing up if the ball goes to center field because there was no one on the base to receive it. The runner will naturally go along to third and perhaps home. Therefore, you must watch the catcher closely for

92 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

signals. It is one of your principal duties. If you think a runner is taking too big a lead with each pitch, slip the catcher a sign that you will cover after the pitcher delivers the next ball. Then dash for the bag when the pitcher delivers the ball, because the catcher will drive the ball at it, and you must be there.

The shortstop must possess a good head since he has so many things to remember and so many signs for which to watch. With a man on third base and less than two out, move several feet inside the base line so you can make a play at the plate and cut off the run. Of course, if you should fumble and there is a man on first base, too, do not be discouraged and lose your head because you cannot make the play to the plate. Look and see if you have not time to catch the runner going to second. Always try for a play somewhere. Do not give up because you have missed one. But never attempt useless throws. They are dangerous. Of course, the stages of the game and the situations make a vast difference as to how these plays are made. If there is one out, with men on first and third, many managers, as I said in discussing the second baseman, prefer to have their infield play back to try for a double play. I will go into this more exhaust-

tively when I begin to talk about team work.

The shortstop has much backing up to do. He should back up the second baseman on all throws to second that he does not receive himself, and he should help out the third baseman a good deal, too. The shortstop is frequently called upon to cover third. Suppose there is a man on second, and the third baseman must go in to get a slow hit. He makes the play to first and has not time to get back to his bag. The runner from second starts down, and the shortstop must cover or the other team has gained a base, and one base means the game oftener than you would think.

The shortstop must be active. He must go after every ball that he thinks he can reach. Be careful about flies. Do not conflict with other players, for collisions are dangerous and have laid up many a good man. If you go after a high fly, shout: "I've got it!"

You ought to get an answer from the other player who might possibly be pursuing it: "Go ahead! Take it!"

VIII

THIRD BASE

IF I were to pick the hardest position on the ball club to play, I would name third base. There are three qualities absolutely essential to a good third baseman. He must be fast and game and have a good arm, the best of any man in the infield with the possible exception of the shortstop. Both require great whips.

Third base is the one position on a ball club where there are no easy chances. I played it myself for a good many years and I am in a position to say this positively. The ball is either hit at you like a shot, or it is a slow roller, and you have to hurry it to get the ball to first base in time to nail the runner. The third baseman must have an arm as good as a catcher to handle his job properly, and he needs to be an accurate thrower. When the third baseman goes back behind the bag for the ball, he has got to throw over-handed. Remember that. He cannot heave the ball across

the diamond fast enough from the under-hand swing to do any good.

Because of the many necessary fielding qualifications in a man fit to be a first-class third baseman, a fair hitter can generally hold his job, although, oddly enough, some of the best batters in the country have been and are now third basemen.

Again, in this position I like a rangy man, although there have been some very good short men who have covered third base. I am not tall myself. The rangy man has a better reach and can cover more ground and accept and get away with more hard chances than the shorter one. But if an attempt is made to place too big a man at third base, he is not so fast, as a rule, and, above all things, the good third baseman must be fast.

Ordinarily, the third baseman should stand about ten feet inside the diamond from the bag and in front of the base line. Of course, the third baseman shifts about according to conditions, like any other infielder, but we are taking it for granted now that there is no runner on the bases and an ordinary hitter is at the plate. The third baseman must keep track of his batters carefully because some fast men are always trying to cross him and drop down a bunt

96 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

when he is not looking for it. We will come to the handling of bunts later along. The duties of a third baseman can be divided into three parts—fielding ordinary hits, playing bunts, and covering the bag. It is small wonder that it has been called the "busy corner."

The third baseman gets all kinds of hard hits jammed at him. When he crosses over to his right to get a ball, he should not run back any further than necessary, because in this way he turns his back on first base and is all out of shape to throw. Cut over as squarely as you can to intercept the ball and steady yourself before throwing, if you have time. When you are away over behind the bag, you must drive the ball across the diamond over-handed or you cannot get enough into it to make it carry. (Ill. No. 21.) If a boy, trying to be a third baseman, encounters a certain kind of a ball to field which is particularly difficult for him, let him keep after just that one until he has overcome the weakness. Do not try to conceal it.

Probably the hardest thing a third baseman has to do is handle bunts, because it is dangerous work and requires great nerve. There are certain situations in every game when a batter is more liable to bunt than at other times. For instance, if a club needs one run badly, and

there is a man on first, with none out, the chances are that the batter is going to lay it down to advance that man and try to get the run across the plate. Then the third baseman should move about ten feet in toward the plate. Watch the bat of the hitter. If, as soon as the pitcher delivers the ball, the batter runs his hand down the stick, start in for the plate. Great speed is required in fielding a bunt, and when a fast man has laid the ball down there is no time to get set to throw. You must learn to let the ball drive unerringly from any position, and if time presses you are frequently required to handle the ball with one hand.

Arthur Devlin, formerly of the Giants, used to have a magnificent throw on this play. He would dash in and scoop the ball with his right hand when the play was close. Then, with a sort of jump and jerk of the arm, he would heave to first base with wonderful accuracy without losing a second of time. That is very advanced baseball, however. The great thing to do in handling bunts is to work fast.

The only possible way in which you can become expert in handling bunts is to practice. Get some boy who desires to learn to bunt to lay the ball down for you to field. There are two things to remember in handling a bunt.

One is to field the ball cleanly, and the other is to get it away fast and to watch your throw. You cannot practice too much on the throw. Be careful not to conflict with the pitcher in handling bunts. The best scheme, I believe, and the one which I follow with my club, is to have the third baseman handle all the bunts he can reach and pass the rest along to the pitcher. If you see you can field a bunt, yell: "I've got it!" and go after it.

Never claim a ball unless you are sure you are going to be able to make good and reach it in time. Make an arrangement with the pitcher that you will handle all bunts you can reach and will accept all which you claim. In this way you will keep him away from the ball and avoid the catastrophe which I have observed occur so often in minor league and amateur clubs. Two men will go after a bunt. Then both will stop, abruptly, thinking that the other player will take it, and the ball will twist down the base line unmolested—and there is a runner on first base. If a club sees that you cannot handle bunts, it will start to lay the ball down right away, and this sends a whole team in the air in a minute.

Keep all bunts possible in foul ground. Batters try to lay the ball down the base line.

If you see the ball is going to roll foul, let it run along until it does and then clamp your hand down upon it and keep the ball out. There are two reasons for this. In handling a bunt, the percentage is all against you. In fielding a perfect bunt, if it is cleanly picked up against a fast runner, the throw should just beat him to the bag. But it is one of the hardest plays in the infield to make, and a wild throw from a bunt often breaks up a game. When a man makes a foul bunt, he has a strike called on him, and he is in the hole and will not try to lay it down again, as a rule.

Fielding bunts requires great nerve because you can never tell when you will move in close, expecting a bunt, and the batter will cross you and hit the ball out. Do not let a batter catch you going in if you can help it, because he is liable to sing the ball past your head, and it does not always go by. Many a third baseman has been hurt when he was slipping in to field a bunt and the batter crossed him and stung the ball on the nose. It is close range on this play, you know. Do not start in further, after you have moved closer to the plate for a bunt before the pitcher delivers the ball, until you see the batter run his hand down the stick to bunt. Then you know he cannot very well

100 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

change his mind. This is just a second or two before he lays the ball down, but it gives you hint enough to get a start.

Always be on your toes. Do not let the batter catch you playing deep and lay down a bunt when you are not expecting it. He will make you look foolish if he does. Always be ready to start after a bunt and do not play too deep at any time. I would not advise a third baseman to take a position behind the base line at any time.

In covering the position at third base, a man must be careful not to conflict with the shortstop on flies or ground balls. The rule I make on my club is to let the third baseman take all ground balls on his left side of which he is reasonably sure, because balls that both he and the shortstop can reach are usually slow-hit ones. If the third baseman cuts over in front of the shortstop he has a shorter throw to make to first and the ball has not traveled so far to a fielder as if the shortstop were to take it. In this way time has been saved, but do not cut over and steal chances from the shortstop when there is not a chance of handling them successfully, and "ball" up a play that the shortstop might have made easily.

I would give the shortstop all the infield

LIBRARY OF THIRD BASE

flies that he can handle, because a shortstop is generally supposed to be good on infield flies, and he has more room to take the ball in front of him than the third baseman. The majority of balls that both the third baseman and shortstop can catch are slightly behind the third baseman, who is playing in close, whereas the shortstop lies deep. I would make it a rule, if I were you, that any time the shortstop yells, "I've got it" he is to go after the ball, it being taken for granted that he has a better chance of catching it than you have. You will have plenty of foul flies to pursue, yourself, on the other side of third base. Let the shortstop go out into left field after them. The trick of getting a foul fly is in the start. Go after it as soon as you see the ball hit, and you will surprise yourself at the large number you can pick off at a great distance. If the sun blinds you, put up your glove to shade your eyes. In going after a high foul fly do not turn around any more than necessary, because it will get you all twisted up and confuse you so it will make the ball very difficult to catch. Always make things as sure as you can and never try to pull off plays purposely to draw applause from the grandstand unless there is no surer way to do it. Such grandstanding

102: HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

does not appeal to the wise manager. Bear that in mind.

The third baseman should watch the infield signals passed out by either the shortstop or second baseman, because he needs to know who is going to cover the bag when an attempt to steal is expected from a base-runner. If the shortstop is to cover, the third baseman should move over slightly to plug up the hole that will be left in the infield by these other duties of the shortstop. But do not make this shift too evident or it may tip off the other team to what you expect. Never let your opponents see your hand.

The worst hole in which the third baseman will find himself is with a man on second base. The batter is liable to bunt or hit, or the runner may try to steal in this situation. The third baseman of ability must keep in close touch with the stages of the game. If the score is close and one run is sorely needed, the batter may bunt with a man on second. The runner may try to steal if the other team is daring. The third baseman must be ready to cover the bag or field a bunt. My way is to have the man move in slightly with the pitch, but not so far that he cannot get back to cover the bag in case the runner steals.

There is a great knack in learning to touch a runner coming into third base when there is to be a play made there. Place yourself so he has to go in front of you to the bag. (Ill. No. 22.) Then you can get him coming into the bag from any direction before he touches it. It is a dangerous position, because a runner will make desperate efforts to get into third, since he is then very close to scoring a run. Give him the base line, but put yourself in a position so he cannot slide behind you and you cannot miss him coming into the bag.

Cover your bag on all plays when there is the possibility of an out at third base—that is, of course, if the ball is not hit at you. Do not let any base-runners get away from you, but do not block them altogether, as you are almost sure to get cut in this way. In case of a long hit that threatens to be a home run, stand on the inside corner of the bag so as to make the runner go around you. You are then within your rights, and the extra steps he takes may avert a home run.

In taking your position, always play about on the line between first and third unless you expect a bunt, and then move in before the pitcher delivers the ball. You must also move up slightly when there is a man on third and

the play may be at the plate to cut off a run. But do not move in as much as the shortstop, second and first basemen do, because they have been playing deep and you have not. Then it is your job to worry the base-runner by slipping over to the bag occasionally and bringing him back. Do not let him take too big a lead on a critical play, and have a sign arranged with the catcher so you can ask for a throw in case you think the runner is going down too far each time the pitcher delivers the ball. You must hold the runner up to the bag.

I am not going into the intricacies of third base play when the double steal is discussed. I shall take up the double steal—that is, with runners on first and third bases—under the head of "Team Work." But I shall say here that the third baseman plays one of the leading parts in breaking it up. His duty is to stick close by his bag, because one of the best ways of stopping a double steal is to have the third baseman cover the bag and instruct the catcher to hurl the ball to third instead of second, after making a bluff throw at second to draw the runner off third, who has been led to believe the catcher will really throw to second. Many Big Leaguers are caught by this trick, and it should be very effectual in the minor leagues.



Illustration No. 25—Great form and style to copy. "Eddie" Collins of the Athletics, a light man, meeting one with all the power of his body and arms. The ball goes from his bat like a bullet from a rifle.



Illustration No. 26—"Willie" Keeler, the king of bunters, laying one down. Notice the position of his hands carefully. The ball is high and ordinarily hard to bunt, except for the great masters of the trick.



Illustration No. 27—The “fall-away” or “hook” slide. The runner has caught the base with his toe, while the rest of his body is pulled away. He has saved himself when he might have been out otherwise. A form to be followed.



Ty Cobb

Illustration No. 28—"Ty" Cobb taking a long chance on being hurt to steal a base. He has used the "hook" slide.

and amateur games. The third baseman must surely be on the bag when the catcher pegs the ball. The runner will be caught too far away and going in the wrong direction four times out of five.

The third baseman should be careful of his hands and not take any more chances than are necessary. Catch the ball flat-handed. There is no reason for receiving broken and disjointed fingers when the hands are held right. The ball should hit the palms.

There is one thing against which I want to warn all infielders, and it is a common fault that I meant to speak of before. Do not field the ball with one knee down on the ground. You will never be a great player doing this any more than you can be a good batter hitting cross-handed. If the ball slips through your hands, it will hit your knee and bounce away too far to recover, nine times out of ten. Again, you are all out of position to throw if you do pick up the ball cleanly. This is very bad form and should never be attempted.

IX

THE OUTFIELD

THREE is so little difference in the duties of the various outfielders that I shall include the three positions in one lesson. It is generally considered among Big League managers that the fastest man and surest fielder is able to do the best work in center-field, since he can go further to get a ball. The outfielder should be speedy, because then he can cover more ground. Size makes little difference, but speed is a necessity.

The first thing an outfielder must learn is to know the opposing batters. The big problem in the outfield is to cover ground, and it is by knowing the peculiarities of the various batters and realizing in which way they are most liable to hit that the outfielders can shift around to the most likely spots.

On a team of any standing the outfielders must compose much of the hitting strength of the club. Big League managers have discov-

ered that almost anybody can be turned into a good fielder if he can hit.

An outfielder must be sure on a fly ball. This can be accomplished only through practice supplemented by some tips which I am now going to give. I would advise all young players to try to catch the ball with their hands above the waist-line instead of below, whenever possible. (Ill. No. 23.) I mean the ball comes in the little-finger side of your hands instead of the thumb side, as it will if you take the ball below your waist-line. Watch some of the great outfielders if you ever get a chance, and you will notice that most of them take the ball as I suggest when they have time to get under it. This style makes the catch surer. Of course, if the chance is a difficult one, you must take the ball any way you can grab it.

The next thing for an outfielder to learn is to judge a fly. This is one trick which can be accomplished only through strict and hard practice. It must become second nature to the good outfielder. He must be able to decide how far the ball is going the minute he gets his eye on it after the batter has hit it, and start for it. He should be able to judge it by the angle and speed. If it is an easy chance, get

under it and be set for it when the ball comes down. The outfield is a great place to try to make grandstand plays, but never do it unless you cannot help it, because grandstand plays are not so sure as straight ones. (Ill. No. 24.)

Always follow the ball and take it from the position which is surest. If the hit is over your head, turn and run with the ball and then glance over your shoulder. You will see many outfielders back up on a ball over their heads, but this is bad form, as you are all off your balance and cannot get back so fast as when you turn and run with the hit. When you think you are back as far as the ball is going, whirl again and set yourself for the catch. In the preliminary practice before a game, size up the wind and observe how it influences fly balls. Also watch out for a "high sky." It makes a ball hard to judge.

There is one thing all outfielders should remember, and that is never to hold the ball after they have once got hold of it. It must be thrown somewhere, because a ball held in the outfield does not do any good. There is no place in the outfield where you can get a runner out. Therefore, get the ball inside the diamond. Be sure to keep in close touch with the game always. Before each man goes to

the plate, figure it over in your mind where you will throw the ball if he hits to you. Keep in front of you the number of runners on the bases and whip the ball to the most important place just as soon as you catch it. If there is no one on the bases and the batter makes a single, hurl the ball to second base, quickly, because the runner is liable to slip up another base on you if you are not careful.

Good outfielders need good arms. A man with a weak wing should never try to cover one of the garden positions, because there are so many long throws to make. A weak arm means that every time the batter puts up a fly with a runner on third base, no matter how short it may be, that run will score. In throwing to the plate, if you are at all deep, drive the ball on a line and let the catcher take it on the first bound. If you try to make it carry on the fly, the parabola will be so great that the runner will beat the ball easily. On a clean single, with none on the bases, the outfielder should never throw to first base, because there is no chance of catching the runner at that point unless he should slip or fall, or some such unexpected thing occur. A wild throw to first means an extra base for the runner. Throw to second on a clean single.

110 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

The next thing against which I want to warn an outfielder is over-reaching himself. If there is a short line hit, and you do not think you can reach the ball on the fly, take it on the bounce and make it sure. Then the hitter gets only one base. If you dash in and try to take the ball on the fly, the chances are you will get it on the pick-up, it will go through you, and instead of one base the man will make two or three. The outfielder should always be busy backing up the infielders whenever possible. The center fielder is supposed to back up second base on all throws.

The outfielder must not be afraid to make a lot of noise. If he goes after a ball and he thinks he is in the territory of either of the other two fielders, he should yell, in loud tones: "I've got it!"

I have seen many good men laid up for months through collisions with other outfielders because they did not yell.

Conflicts over fly balls have lost many games and cost many players. Outfielders should always back up one another, however. This is very important. If you are the center fielder and there is a hit to right field, which the right fielder claims, go behind him and back him up so that if he loses the ball it will not roll to

the fence. You cannot afford to get lazy on this. Outfielders should always back up the infielders, too, whenever possible. Conscientious backing up is almost half of the team play of baseball. The left fielder should run in behind the third baseman on all throws, and the right fielder should ease over toward first on all throws. Many times you will make the journey in vain, but there will come an occasion when you back up and it saves a game.

The good outfielder must be sure on ground balls, because a hit through him means an extra base or two always. He should not play ground balls in exactly the same way that an infielder does, since he must be surer of stopping them, and the outfield ground is generally rougher than that of the infield. He should get as much of his body in front of the ball as possible and be certain of blocking it.

Many youngsters are nervous when the ball is hit high in the air at them because they have so much time to contemplate the consequences of dropping it when the crowd is shouting and endeavoring to rattle them. That can be remedied by keeping the eye on the ball and forgetting everything else. Good outfielders learn to do this, and they ignore the cheering entirely. Never banter with the crowd, as

that is dangerous and takes your mind off the game. The great thing to do is to keep your mind strictly on the contest.

Outfielders should learn to line themselves up for a relay on a long hit. The one nearest the ball should chase it, and sometimes, if it is an extensive wallop, it is necessary to throw it to a second outfielder before it can be passed to the infielder, who runs outside the diamond to receive the ball and throw it along to where it will do the most good. Let the man with the best whip of the other two who have not pursued the ball relay it in. Generally, there is one man in an outfield who has the best arm of the three. An outfielder should devote a good deal of time in practicing shooting the ball to the plate, because this has to be done frequently on sacrifice flies and saves plenty of runs.

When you catch a fly, take the ball, if you have plenty of time, in the position you can get a throw away most quickly. For instance, if you are a right-handed player, take it on your right side and drive it to the plate. On Big League clubs, many outfielders shift according to a sign passed them by either the second baseman or shortstop, indicating what sort of a ball the pitcher will throw. On an amateur

team this complicates matters, to my mind. Great care must be exercised in the shift because, if the men move too soon, they will tip off the batter to what ball the pitcher intends to throw. You cannot start to shift until after the pitcher has begun his motion, and you must be on your balance again by the time the ball reaches the batter. My advice to young players is to study the batters closely if you are playing against the same clubs all the time and shift to suit their styles. If you see a man hits naturally toward right field when he comes to the plate a couple of times, let all the outfielders move around that way slightly on his next appearance. You can often tell by the way in which a man swings at the ball where he naturally hits. If he brings his bat around late, he will hit to right field. Or if he picks a ball on the outside of the plate, he will naturally jam it to right field.

My closing advice to outfielders is, be on your toes every time the pitcher delivers the ball, with your hands on your knees, I would suggest, so as to be ready to move in any direction.

X

BATTING

BATTING is a matter of self-confidence and a good eye. Give me a batter, and I will make a ball player out of him. The most difficult thing in baseball to teach a young ball player is how to hit. Always bear in mind in learning to bat that what you think you can do is what you generally accomplish.

It has been frequently asserted by baseball authorities that a batter cannot be made—that it is a natural gift, like writing poetry. I do not contend that instruction will make a batter out of any ball player, but I do say that many men develop into good hitters when minor faults are corrected because they have the eye and the nerve, the two batting essentials.

The worst fault of most amateur ball players in batting is a tendency to step away from the plate. Until this shrinking habit is over-

come a ball player has no chance of becoming a good hitter. Stepping back is a cardinal sin in baseball, and any man who does it would look foolish against an experienced pitcher, because by keeping the ball on the outside of the plate he could prevent the back-stepping batter from connecting with it indefinitely. That is where nerve shows in batting. A man must not be afraid to stand up to the plate.

The first thing that a batter wants to learn is to follow the ball with the eye from the time it leaves the pitcher's hand. Remember that there is always plenty of time to dodge, and there is no necessity for stepping back if the ball appears to be coming at your head when the pitcher delivers it. Most pitched balls can be ducked with a slight movement of the body without stepping out of your tracks. This can be accomplished after the ball has almost reached you. As soon as you step back, you have lost your chance to hit the ball.

In hitting, much depends upon form. The best style is to "choke" the bat up short and use a chop swing. Few men have been great hitters who attempt to take a free swing at the ball. (Ill. No. 25.)

After grabbing the bat about six inches down from the handle end, take your position

in the batter's box about a foot behind the home-plate so that you have your opportunity to step up and get a curve ball after it breaks. Some batters attempt to run up out of the box and hit at a curve before it breaks. Bresnahan, formerly a Giant, frequently attempted this, thinking it would worry a pitcher, and he was very successful in developing this form, but I would advise against it. The umpire, if he is particular, will stop you running out of the batter's box, anyway. You should step straight ahead with a snap swing, getting the body into the blow with the step. In holding the bat, keep the hands not more than two or three inches apart, except when you are bunting. Stand about six inches back from the plate when waiting for the pitch, so you can step up a little. Do not crowd the plate.

Now, to overcome the most serious fault of all—stepping back—if you have it. As you stand in the box before the ball is delivered, let some one draw a line from your back heel parallel to the plate, toward the pitcher's box. Then practice keeping your front foot on the plate side of this line when you step. At first, to get the muscular motions correctly, you might try this without anybody pitching to you. It will be easy then because the reason

a batter steps back is his fear of getting hit with a pitched ball.

After your body has become accustomed to making the correct motions, let somebody pitch to you. If you are still inclined to step back, ask the pitcher to aim the ball at your head, and you will find that it is very easy to duck a ball coming at your head without moving out of your tracks. Just pull your head back.

Now, the head is practically the only tender spot on a batter. You can get hit with a pitched ball in the body and it will not do much damage. A batter must not be timid. You will get hurt much worse by running away than if you stay up to the plate, because in ducking back you lose sight of the ball and are liable to get hit in the stomach or some other soft spot, whereas, if you stand up in your batting position there is no vulnerable portion of the anatomy exposed. Always remember that if you are nicked by a pitched ball it is not going to kill you. And do not be afraid of speed. A fast one hurts less than a slow ball. If you see that the ball is going to hit you, just tighten up your muscles and take it. A fast ball glances off. A slow ball sinks in. Take a few pitched balls in the ribs and you will get over being afraid of them when you

find they don't hurt much. Then you are on a fair way to become a good hitter. Baseball is not a game for mollycoddles.

To become a batter, I would not advise a boy or young man changing his natural form. By this I mean that if he is a right-handed batter he should not attempt to swing around to the other side of the plate and hit left-handed. Many coaches of schoolboys will try to convert a natural right-handed hitter into a left-handed batter because they argue it does not take him so long to reach first base. That, of course, is true, but the gain to a left-hander is not more than a step at best, and a complete shift in form is not worth the difference. Batters more often beat out hits because they get a quick start from the plate rather than because they are left-handed hitters.

There is another thing against which I want to warn all young batters. Some boys will swing cross-handed. By this I mean that a right-handed hitter will put his left hand on top of the right in holding a bat, or vice versa. No player was ever successful in hitting this way because the awkward position of the hands prevents a man from swinging accurately at the ball and results in a clumsiness of form

that prevents good hitting. To correct this habit, if any boy has it, let him swing around to the other side of the plate and try hitting left-handed, still keeping the left hand on top, of course. This cross-handed fault is more prevalent in right-handed hitters than left, I have found. At first this batting left-handed will seem clumsy, but, with practice, should get results. If he is not successful in thus reversing his position, he should return to the right-handed form, but keep the right hand on top of the left in holding the bat. That is essential.

There has been a general effort among Big League managers recently to develop scientific hitters. I instruct all my recruits to bat scientifically, that is, with the "choked" bat and snap swing. Remember that you do not have to knock the cover off the ball to drive it. If you just meet the ball with your body behind the blow you will find that you get satisfactory results. Hold the bat, while waiting for the pitch, in front of you and as high as possible without being unnatural. Always hit down on the ball. In this way you will get line drives or ground hits, which are far more valuable than flies. By hitting on top of the ball you are more likely to have a high batting

average and less likely to hit into a double play.

Now I come to an important feature of batting. Every player should learn to pick out good balls. Never hit at a bad one because, in this way, you are giving the pitcher an advantage, and every time you come to the bat it is a contest of wits between the pitcher and you. Good batters do not let the pitcher get them into the hole—that is, with more strikes than balls—by hitting at everything that he throws them. When you make a pitcher work to the limit every time you bat you are not only helping yourself but your club. If a twirler finds that a small man will offer at a ball off the outside of the plate, he will keep them there and the batter will never get a hit. A small man cannot reach a ball on the outside of the plate. Therefore, it is very important that a batter become a good judge of a strike, and this knowledge can only be obtained by practice and self-confidence. The short hold will help you in this, because you can stop your swing before the bat crosses the plate if you see the ball breaking out of reach, and a strike will not be called on you.

In scientific batting, a man should learn to "hit behind the runner," as Big Leaguers call

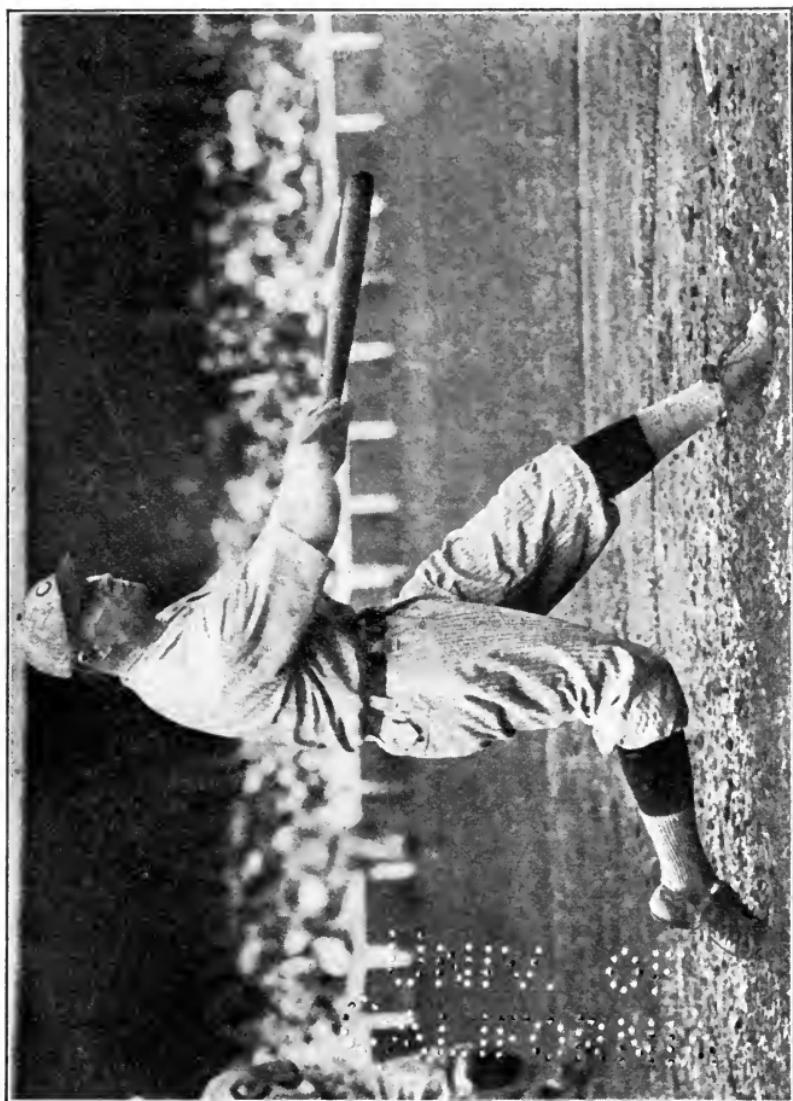


Illustration No. 29—Frank Chance, now manager of the New York Americans. He is one of the great exponents of the "inside" game and a thorough believer in team work.



Illustration No. 30—"Johnny" Evers, manager of the Cubs, at the finish of his swing. As a ball player, Evers is one of the craftiest the game ever produced.

it. By this, I mean that if there is a runner on first base, the batter should try to hit toward right field. It is easy to explain the reason. If he smashes the ball at the shortstop or third baseman, he will probably hit into a double play, forcing the runner at second base; but if he drives it to right field, the runner should reach third base, and, even if he hits to the first baseman, the chances are much better for the runner reaching second than if he hits to the shortstop or third base. With a man on first, even if the batter makes a clean single to left field, the runner will probably get no further than second base.

After getting so you can pick out a strike, you must learn what kind of a ball you will drive to right or left field as the occasion may demand. For instance, a right-handed batter would not pick out a ball on the inside of the plate if he wanted to hit to right field. He can very easily drive a ball on the outside to right field. It is practically impossible to hit an inside ball to right because you would have to push it with the handle of the bat. A good batter should learn to hit one kind of a ball as easily as another. That is, he should not develop a "groove."

The next feature of batting that I want to

122 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

take up is bunting. No man was ever a good ball player who could not bunt the ball. This requires much practice and is not dependent upon natural ability. First of all, in bunting, learn to pick out good balls. It is impossible to lay a bad ball down, and if the pitcher suspects you are going to bunt, he will keep the ball high, as the low ball is preferable for bunting. Therefore, be careful not to telegraph or give any indication that you intend to lay it down. Hold your bat as you would if you were going to hit the ball out until the pitcher has delivered it. Just as he lets go of the ball, run your right hand, if you are a right-handed batter, about half-way down the bat and hold the stick loosely so as to deaden the bunting of the ball. Get your bat out in front of you. (Ill. No. 26.)

In all, the bat should not be moved more than eight inches in bunting. Remember that it is all done out in front. Do not hold your bat behind the line of your body, because if you do the ball will not drop down dead, but a short fly is liable to result. The whole secret of bunting is dropping the bat on the ball while the stick is held loosely.

Do not bunt the ball straight at the pitcher,

but turn it either toward first or third bases. This can easily be accomplished by holding the bat at an angle and will come with practice. An advantage of getting the bat a foot or two in front of the plate is that you have a better chance of bunting the ball fair and along the base line. You are then inside the diamond when you bunt it rather than outside, which you would be if you held the bat back of the plate.

As soon as you bunt the ball, get away to first base. The secret of beating out bunts is in the runner's start. But do not misunderstand me. Many young ball players will be so anxious to break away from the plate in a hurry that they will mess up their bunt as a result of this eagerness. First, make sure that you have laid the ball down, and then get your start. Recently, in the Big League, the bunt has been used to sacrifice a runner around the bases, and the primary purpose of that is to advance a runner and not get the batter on first base. Always remember this when you bunt the ball, and make sure that you have laid it down so that the runner can advance, forgetting all about yourself until that part of

124 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

the job is done. Then do your best to beat it out.

The batter should, above all things, make the bunt unexpected. After a ball player has learned the fine points of hitting, he will find that he can start to bunt and then hit the ball out, if he sees a third baseman coming in, by a quick snap swing. That is one of the advantages of this "choked" style which I recommend. A man who takes a long swing at the ball could not do this.

In conclusion, I want to emphasize the fact that, to be a successful batter, a boy should develop his eye and his courage. Never run away from a pitched ball. Always show nerve. If the pitcher has the count, two strikes and one ball against you, do not make up your mind you are going to swing at the next ball for fear of its being called the third strike. The chances are the pitcher will try to get you to swing at a bad one because he has you in a hole. Look it over carefully before you hit at it, and keep out of the hole. As I have said, learn to bat to the different fields, using judgment according to the situation. Employ a natural style, if it has none of the glaring faults I have mentioned, but

develop the "choke" hold on the bat and the chop swing. Step square out and a little bit toward the plate and into the ball. The step is an important thing, and remember that self-confidence is the big asset in batting.

XI

BASE RUNNING

SPEED does not necessarily make a base runner. Many sprinters who have climbed to the Big League have been poor base runners until drilled in the art. Fast men, however, have a big advantage over the slower ones, because they can let out between the bases; but, if you are not a ten-second performer, do not become discouraged and feel you cannot learn any of the tricks of running the bags.

Base running is one of the important features of playing the game right, because it is through clever work on the paths that the tallies are scored, and, if a man is going to be so thick-skulled every time he gets a life that he will be put out, it is no advantage for his team to get him on the bags. He will only block them anyway, then. The essentials of base running are speed between the bags, a quick start, a good slide coming in, and brains.

There are several rules which every player

should follow when he arrives on the bases. The first and most important is that he is never out until he is touched by the ball. Many players who get up as high as the Big Leagues seem to forget this, and readily surrender when their death appears to be probable. I fine a man on my club who does that kind of work. The base runner must always bear in mind the situation at hand, or the "stage." It is imperative that he keep track of the score, the number of outs, the count on the batter, the other men on the bases, if any, and various details. The score makes a big difference, and his actions are largely influenced by it. There are certain times when he would take a long chance, and other occasions when it pays to be conservative. I believe poor base running loses more ball games than any other one thing, but the reason so little is heard of it is because poor base running is not as apparent to the spectator as bad fielding and batting. More men on my club are fined for poor base running than for any other kind of "bulls." I do not find fault with a man for a mechanical fielding error, but, if he loafes on a hit that should go for two bases, and takes only one on it, he will find himself fined. Such mistakes as this break

up ball games. A poor runner on the bases who does not know when to take a chance and will try to steal whenever the spirit prompts him will lose the game for you any time if you don't watch him closely. Many things must be taken into consideration in running the bases. First of all, the pitcher is the key to the situation when a stolen base is planned. Pitchers are responsible for almost as many stolen bases as the catchers. The catcher must also be taken into the equation, however.

Of course, every player should endeavor to develop speed. Next, he must learn the hook slide—to my mind the most valuable asset of any base runner. This consists in hooking the bag with one leg and throwing the body away from the baseman covering it. It gives him the smallest possible surface to touch, and increases the chances of stealing the base. Only practice will get you that hook slide. With this almost any ball player will find he will rank high among the best base runners on his team. It is surprising how often it gets a man into the bag safe after the baseman is waiting for him with the ball. (Ill. No. 27.)

In stealing second, watch the baseman and not the ball, because, if you try to turn to see where the ball is coming in, you are going to

lose speed, and a step or two counts a whole lot in stealing second. By watching the man who is going to cover, you can figure out where the ball is coming from, and throw your body away from it, so as to make it harder for him to put it on you. Slide around him if he tries to block you off the bag; assert your rights by sliding in with your spikes showing, but never put the steel to a man on purpose for the sake of putting him out of the game when there is no excuse for it.

My suggestion for learning the hook slide is for a crowd of boys to put a bag in a sand box and practice running at full speed and sliding into this, just hooking the bag with your toe. Be careful not to overslide the bag, because then you are out sure. I would advise all boys to slide feet first, since there is less danger of hurting some vital part that way, and you can command more respect from the baseman. Only a few Big Leaguers use the head-first slide nowadays. (Ill. No. 28.)

Base runners must learn to watch and obey their coaches. That is the secret of good base running, and the coaches selected have got to be clever men. As a general rule, I believe it advisable for a team to select two or three men who appear to be the most com-

petent in this line for the regular coachers to advise the base runners. When things are not so important other players can go out on the lines and try their hands at coaching, so that they may learn the ropes. When a man is coaching he gets a look at the whole game, and this experience is valuable, because it will help him in his base running. Frequently the crowd will make so much noise after the ball is hit it is impossible to hear the coachers' voices. It is necessary, therefore, for them to depend largely on motions. If you see a coacher waving to you to come on, do not hesitate to obey, because he is supposed to be in a position to exercise better judgment than you, and he will be to blame if you are caught. Never run into a block sign given by a coacher. It is easy for a coacher to stop a man on any base by holding up the hand like a traffic cop when he halts a string of vehicles. If the coacher wants you to go back, he will wave his hands toward you, while he will beckon if he thinks you should continue. These signals are easy to grasp. They are not hidden, and the intent is evident on the face of them.

Let us take a specific case. If you are on first base and the batter makes a hit, of course you must go to second—we are taking it for

granted that the word hit means a safe one. Do not look anywhere until just before you reach second base. Then glance toward the coacher at third. If he is beckoning to you to come on, take the turn without breaking your stride, and swing away toward third at top speed without having slowed up. As you approach third glance at the coacher again. If he is pushing his hands down toward the ground you know he means that there is going to be a play at the bag, and you have got to slide. Look at the baseman to see how he is playing, and "hit the dirt" so as to make it as difficult as possible for him to tag you. Of course, the coacher will use his voice, too, but the shouted instructions should always be supplemented with signals.

As you approach the base you may be able to hear him yell, "Slide! Slide!" But, by looking at his motions, you can surely tell what he means for you to do. The coacher must be careful not to tell a man to slide unless he has to in order to get the base. Every time a ball player "hits the dirt" he takes a chance on a sprained ankle, or twisted knee, or some other injury that may put him out of the game for some time. Therefore, it is the coacher's duty to save the men as much as

possible, and not order any one to slide when he can just as well come into the base standing up.

The great thing in stealing a base is the start, or "jump." Whenever you get to first on a safe hit, always take your turn, because you can never tell when some one is going to mishandle the ball and you will be able to move up one more base on the fumble or throw. An extra base very often means the victory in a game of ball, especially the difference between first and second, because a hit scores a man on second, while it carries a runner on first generally only to second, sometimes to third. Therefore, never fail to take the turn.

Get your lead as soon as you reach first base. Study the pitcher closely. On some twirlers you can take a bigger lead than on others, according to a pitcher's style of delivery and preliminary motions. Always be up on your toes, ready to get back to the bag. One thing about which you should be careful is not to let the pitcher get you going the wrong way—that is, with your weight toward second, so you cannot scramble back. You are almost sure to be caught flat-footed then. If you are playing against the same clubs continually you

should be able to figure out exactly how big a lead you can take on each pitcher. The thing is figured down so fine in the majors that a pitcher can tell just how much each player can take on him. Some can take more than others. If he notices the man a little farther away than the stipulated distance, then he can get him. The reason some pitchers can hold men closer to the bag than others is because of a sort of half-balk motion which they develop. It is a balk, according to the rules, if the pitcher faces the plate and makes a motion toward the batter and then throws to first. The base runner can leave the bag just as soon as the twirler begins his delivery, but some twirlers have a habit of hunching their pitching shoulder, as if to deliver the ball to the batter, and then throwing to first. Watch out for such tricks. The pitcher will often throw to the bag, when he does not expect to get you, but simply to hold you close—that is, he will if he is a good pitcher.

By clever leading the smart base runner can outguess the catcher and make him think he is going to try to steal. In this way he induces the receiver to order pitchouts, which means that the twirler wastes a couple of balls. Then the batter has him in the hole, and he

must lay the ball over the plate. When the pitcher is forced to put the ball over the plate you have a better chance of making second than when he can afford to waste one. Under the latter circumstances the catcher receives the ball in a perfect position to throw, and can get it away much quicker. Jockeying is also essential to the successful working of the hit-and-run play, as I showed in my article on team work. When you finally make up your mind to go, edge a little farther off the base than heretofore, and dig with the first hint of a motion toward the batter. Don't go unless you have the "jump."

If players display inclinations to steal at the wrong time the captain or manager of a club should arrange a sign to tell each man when to go. Nothing will disturb the equilibrium of a ball game like a man running down on you at the wrong stage. I retain absolute control of my men. Every time one of the Giants tries to steal a base he does it at my direct orders.

There are many fancy angles to base running, but these points which I have just made are the fundamental ones. The double steal, for instance, is a great play, but one to try only when your club is far in the lead, or trail-

ing by a good margin. It is rated as a long chance. If one run will benefit you and put you in the game, or put you ahead, and none is out, that is no time to essay the double steal. It is a good play when two are out, and a weak batter up. The smart base runners must catch their opponents off their guard in executing it. Try the double steal when it is not expected. To succeed with it the opposing team must be outguessed.

Base runners should always make a fight of it when nipped between the bags, especially if there is a man running behind. By dying hard, you will give him a chance to move up a base while you are being put out, if you are caught between second and third, or third and home. Then there is always the chance for a slip and both being safe. Remember all these little things. Of course, if it is a warm day, the pitcher should not permit the other side to run him to death and tire him out, so that he will not be able to work the next inning.

Always be wide-awake in running the bases. Bear in mind the count on the batter. If it is three balls and two strikes, start for the next base on the windup and run hard. The batter must either hit it, or walk, or strike out. You

have two chances that you will have to move anyway, and, if he does hit it, glance at the coacher, or the ball, if you can see it, to be sure it is not a fly. Practice makes a man's ears so keen he can tell by the sound of the ball on the bat whether it is a fly ball or not. If the batter does fan you still have a chance to steal. Don't try to steal home. It is a foolish play at any stage, and the chances are always against you. Do not joke with the basemen, because they will take your mind off the ball and catch you asleep. If a baseman says anything to you, let him talk along to himself. It is an old trick of the Big League to draw a man into conversation, and then have some other player sneak in and tag him. Big Leaguers call this "turning the runner," because his head is turned away from the ball when he looks around to answer.

As a rule follow the ball closely when you can without reducing your speed, and obey your coachers. Be ready to jump into full speed at the slightest sign from a coacher after you have started to slow up coming into a base on a hit. Always have coachers on the lines. They are important. Make up a clear, concise set of signs for base running. When the signal is given for the double steal, make sure

that every one involved understands. This list includes the batter and the two base runners. The coacher usually gives the sign, which is some simple and natural movement. He should get an answer from the batter and both base runners.

Stealing third, as a rule, is unprofitable, unless there is some good reason for it. The successful steal of second pays better. You can score on a hit from second. The double steal, with men on first and second, is a bad play for a close game. It is used only now and then to "cross" the other team. On long hits, learn to touch all the bags without slowing up. Just step on the inside corner of each base. And you must have wind to sprint around the bags on a long hit. Therefore, cultivate endurance.

XII

TEAM WORK

VARIOUS estimates have been hazarded by experts on the value of a manager to a ball club. Some critics do not figure him into the equation at all, while others overrate him. It is a co-operative position. The team cannot get along without a directing force, and the manager cannot succeed without a team. In these remarks on managing a team, in the case of most amateur clubs they will apply to the captain when I refer to the duties of the manager, because, as a rule, such a club does not have any other leader. (Ill. No. 29.)

Team play is very important to the success of a club, and it is increasing in its importance every season. Within the last three years I have seen clubs in the Big Leagues composed of good players which have failed to succeed because they lacked an efficient style of team play.

First, if you are the captain or manager of

a ball club, select your general style of play. If you have a team of fast men, I would advise the shifting, versatile attack, switching constantly on your opponents. This keeps them guessing, and the great thing to do is to worry your enemies on the diamond.

If the club is slow and inclined to be sluggish, but has many hard hitters, you will have to adopt a more conservative plan. It is foolish to send a slow man down to steal second. You will be forced to depend on the batting of the men who follow him to the plate. Players of the sluggish cast are not so desirable as the other type. Speed is the great thing nowadays.

Keep after the players all the time. Encourage them and insist that they keep constantly on their toes. Make them show plenty of pepper and spirit and aggression. This carries a long way. Never let the other side see you are beaten or are losing courage.

First of all, the young ball player must learn about the "stages" of a game. There are many things you would try at one "stage" which would be ridiculous under other conditions. There are times when it pays to be conservative and others when it is best to take the long chance. The latter represents the

desperate "stage." Every team should have a leader in charge, whether he is the captain or manager, and the players should obey his orders implicitly. If he is not competent, get another leader, but follow the man you have picked out.

Players make a hit with me who work hard all the time, show an aggressive spirit, and keep chewing the rag. As long as an infield maintains a running fire of conversation, the other team is impressed with your confidence. It also keeps up the fighting spirit of your fellow-players. Now, do not misunderstand me by the use of the term "fighting spirit."

There is such a thing in a ball game as a healthy, fighting spirit that does not necessitate a knowledge of the Marquis of Queensberry rules and regulations. Keep after the other team all the time by every fair means you have at your command. It's all right to try to discourage an opponent by clean conversation.

"We'll get you yet," you can shout at him if you are behind. "Watch us come at the finish."

Or if your club is leading:

"Well, we've got you on the run. You'll never catch us now."

The young player must remember that it is best to sacrifice individual records for the team success. Always play for the club first. And while we are still discussing the spirit of a club, which comes under the head of team work, I want to advise all infielders to throw the ball around as much as possible when no danger is attached to the process. If a runner is retired at first and there are no others on the bases, pass the ball around the infield with a display of pepper that would look like a show of confidence on a moving-picture film. It impresses the other team, and, besides, keeps the infielders, who may have been idle for some time, livened up and warmed to their work. But always be careful not to throw the ball around if there is a man on base, when a wild heave would be detrimental to your club. Bear in mind constantly the "stage" of the game, which means keeping track of the number of outs in the inning, the score, and the count on the batter.

Roughly speaking, we will consider two "stages," although the game is subdivided into many more by the smart Big League manager. One "stage" is when the score is close, and the other when a large margin separates the two opposing clubs. If the score is close and your

club is leading by a single run, say, you must take every chance to add to this lead so you will be safer. One run is of immense value to your team then. It will double your lead. Play what we Big Leaguers call a close game.

Suppose the first batter in the inning gets on base. Order the next hitter to sacrifice so the first one can reach second, from where a hit will score him. You are figuring on the other side playing the game cleanly in laying your plans this way. Baseball is largely a matter of chance and probability, and it is the man who can figure the chances closest and get the right answer the greatest number of times who is the best leader. If you advance the runner to second, he has two chances of scoring on a clean hit because there is only one out when he reaches the middle station.

Besides these chances on a clean hit, there is always the possibility of an error which may break up the game. Seasoned players will tell you that more errors are made on a bunt than on any other kind of a ball. The bunt must be handled hastily and accurately. Therefore, when the batter is instructed to sacrifice, which means bunting, there is the chance of the runner reaching third or scoring on a fumble or bad throw. He is sure of second. A lead of

two runs is fairly safe in the Big League, because then you have time to see a storm coming and yank your pitcher before the score is tied.

But if circumstances have convinced you that the bunt is not the play at this time because the opposing club is looking for it, or for some other reason, you might try the hit and run. This is a more open game and has been worked successfully by my club for the past two seasons. It is a great play when it succeeds, but it makes a club look foolish when it fails. Each batter has some simple hit and run sign that all the other men on the club know. The hitter passes this to the base-runner, and the latter should signify by some return signal that he has caught the sign and understands it. A great deal of jockeying helps this play. The batter must hit at the next ball, no matter where it comes, after he gives his sign, because the base-runner is going to start with the pitch, and he will be made to look foolish by the ease with which he is tagged out at second if the batter fails to connect. It is for this reason that the sign for the play should be carefully concealed. If the opposing club is tipped off and expects it, there is no trouble about breaking up the hit.

and run with a pitch-out, thus catching the base-runner easily at second.

If a man can get on first base and make believe he is going to attempt to steal so the catcher will order a couple of pitch-outs and get the twirler in the hole, the hit and run play will work out more successfully, because then the pitcher has to put the ball over the plate and the batter will have his chance to hit at it. The hit and run play is more appropriate in an open game when a manager desires to take a longer chance. If the club is two or three runs behind, or leading by a safe margin, I would advise it rather than when the game is very close. There is less chance of its going through than the sacrifice, because the batter must first connect with the ball and, second, hit it on the ground, but the returns are bigger when it is successful. If he drives a fly to the infield, the runner has naturally taken such a long start off first base he will be doubled up unless it is a very high pop fly. The batter should try to hit behind the runner, too, the trick I mentioned in the article on batting. The whole purpose of the play is to catch the opposing team off its guard and pick up a flying start for the base-runner, who gets in motion when the pitcher begins his delivery.

It takes clever men to work this play and get away with it. The sacrifice is safer when the game is close. But if the batter can make a single on the hit and run, the runner on first will reach third and possibly score. The chances of getting a safe hit are increased because the infield is pulled all out of shape by the premature start of the runner. (Ill No. 30.)

Now, if you are behind by a big margin, the club should take more chances. Suppose your opponents have a lead of five runs, one will do you no good. Never sacrifice under these circumstances, but take longer shots for bigger stakes. This is a desperate "stage." Take every chance in the hope that you can rush your opponents off their feet. Once you get them going, often five or six runs may be piled up in an inning before they can stop you. That is the only way to overcome a big lead—by a sudden rally. Instruct your batters to hit it out. Send men home from third if there is the slightest chance of their scoring. Run wild on the bases in the hope that the other team will get throwing around and go up in the air.

There are various "stages" of a game when it is foolish to try to steal a base. Again, the

attempt is imperative. If you have a lead of one run or need a run to tie, or if one run is going to make a whole lot of difference to your team and a man reaches first with none out, he should not try to steal. It is too big a risk at that "stage." But suppose, under the same pressing need of one run, a player arrives at first with two out. He cannot score from first base if the batter makes a single, but he probably can from second. Therefore, his object is to reach second as soon as possible. Let him steal at the earliest opportunity when he has any chance at all of success. If he thinks the twirler is playing for him and is going to pitch out on the first ball, it would be ridiculous to try to steal. A man must use his individual judgment under those circumstances. But get down there on second, and you are then in a position to score on a hit. It takes speed and wits to do it.

A great scheme in planning the attack of a ball club is to search for the opposing team's weakness. Most of them have one. If you find that their pitcher is wild, send every man to the bat with orders to take two called strikes before swinging at the ball. This is called "waiting a man out." If it fails to succeed because the pitcher does not lose control, shift

suddenly after the twirler has begun to believe he can slip the first two balls over the plate without any danger, he having discovered your waiting tactics, as he would. Tell your men to hit the first ball. Never stick to one system if it is not winning for you.

The infield, with the catcher, plays the most important part in defensive team work. Suppose we consider some specific plays. The destroying of the double steal is a big problem on the defense. It can be worked by outguessing the other side, and it can be broken up by outwitting your opponents. I would not advise selecting any one system for attacking the double steal and sticking to it unwaveringly. Of course, I expect that all my readers know I refer to that delicate situation in a ball game when there is a man on first base and one on third. If the catcher throws the ball to second, there is grave danger of the runner on third coming home. Yet if no effort is made to get the man going to second, you will lose too many runs in a season to attain any success. You will find that in game after game runs have been scored because that extra man got to second when these tallies would never have been counted if he had been held on first base.

148 HOW TO PLAY BASEBALL

I would recommend to young teams that they try to break up the double steal by the short throw as a regular thing. This requires much accuracy to work it successfully. The shortstop or second baseman runs over behind the pitcher, standing about twenty feet directly in front of second base when he sees the man on first start for second. The catcher drives the ball to him. If the man on third breaks for home, it is up to him to throw back to the catcher, but if he sticks to third, he can turn and toss to the player covering second in time to get the runner coming to second. If this player is smart, he will retrace his tracks toward first so that the ball gets in motion in the resultant effort to run him down, and then the runner on third will dig for home when he sees a good chance.

Other methods of attacking the double steal, which should be employed frequently by way of variety to "cross" the opposing team, are for the catcher to throw directly either to the pitcher or third baseman. If a smart catcher will study closely the styles and weaknesses of base-runners, he can tell the men he will get away from third base on this trick. It is worked as follows:

When the catcher gets the ball, he makes a

bluff motion toward second, as if to throw, but does not let go of the ball. The runner on third is on his toes, and seeing this, starts for home. Then the catcher shoots to the third baseman, who tags the runner. You would be surprised at the number of times the man will be caught away from the bag. If the double steal is worked straight, the man on third must start for home as soon as the catcher throws to second to have any chance of success. There are other ways of working the double steal, but this is the most common.

When the ball is thrown to the pitcher, he can shoot it to either second or third. As he whirls, third base comes into his range of vision, and if he sees the runner has started from there, he can deliver the ball to the third baseman. Of course, it is best to get the man nearest home always. If the runner has hugged third base, he can still throw to second with a chance of getting the man going there.

Some leaders recommend drawing their in-fields in to make the play at the plate whenever a man is on third base and another on first, with less than two out. I prefer trying for the double play unless the game is very close. Of course, if none are out, with men on

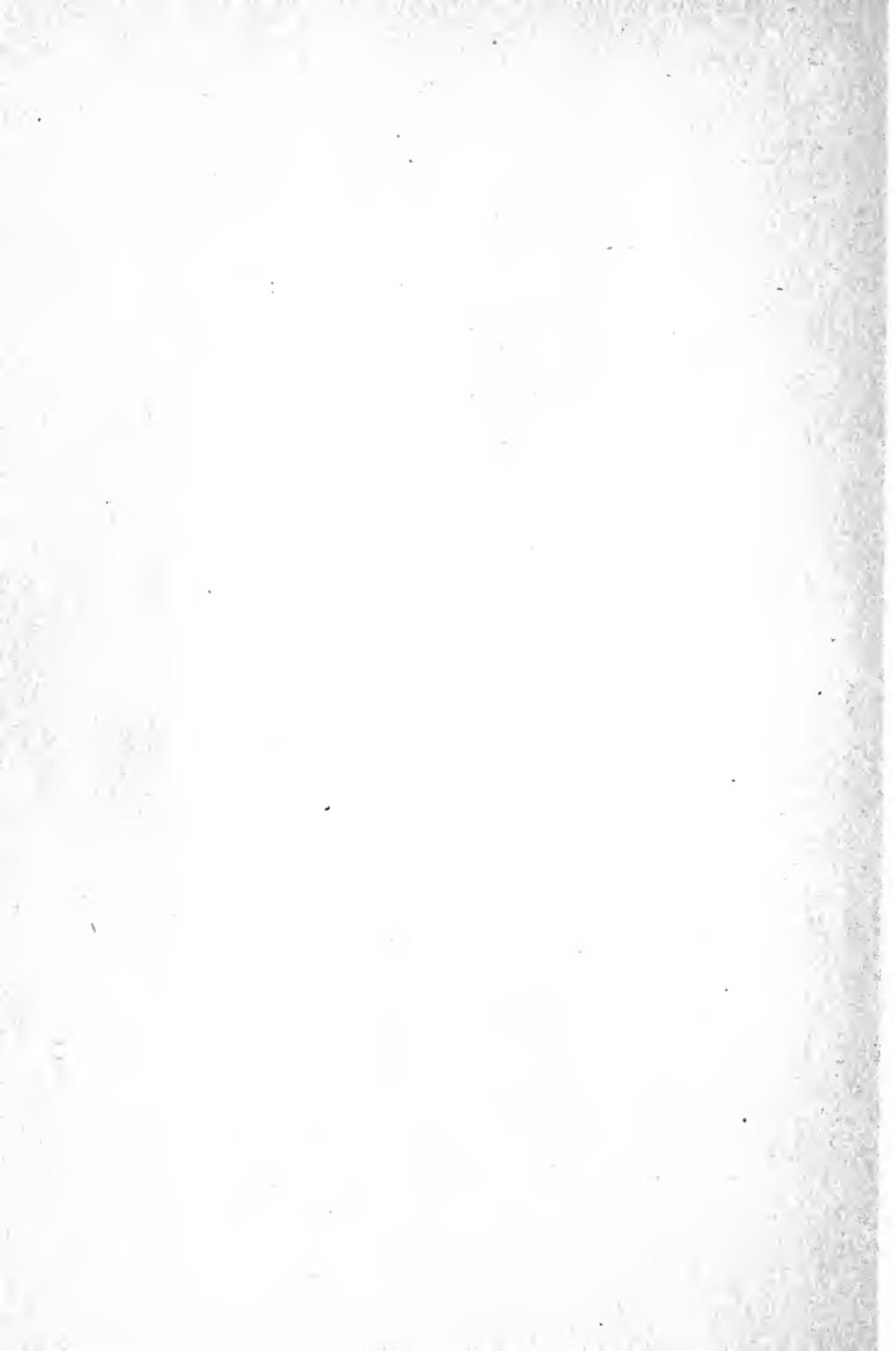
first and third, you've got to draw the infield in for the play at the plate or sacrifice a run. Or, if there is no one on first, and a man on third, and less than two out, it is again necessary to bring the infield in for the play at the plate. But with men on first and third, with one out, I prefer to try to retire the side on the double play unless the batter is very fast. There is not so much chance with the infield playing back of a ball going through for extra bases. Of course, there arise situations when it is best to make the play at the plate. There are none of these finer situations about which a hard and fast rule can be laid down. The best I can do is suggest the most likely way.

With men on first and second bases and less than two out, I would advise that the first baseman move out of his position about twenty feet down the line, toward the home plate, prepared for a bunt. He should play this bunt to third if he fields it, where the runner is forced. If he sees it is too late to make the play there, he can still toss the ball to first to the second baseman who is covering. The pitcher should make this play in the same way. There is one infallible rule to follow on the defense. Get the man nearest the plate if possible. In this way you save runs. With

two out, always make the easiest and surest play.

Infielders must remember to help other infielders. For instance, the third baseman shifts over slightly to cover up the hole left by the shortstop when the latter moves in preparing to cover second base to get a man stealing. Bear in mind you are not nailed fast to one place when playing ball and are expected to move around to meet emergencies.

A complete system of signals should be arranged by the boss of the team, and every man should have these by heart. Do not make the code too complicated. There are the defensive and offensive signs. These include the battery, base running and fielding signs. The leader should be able to signal a base-runner when to steal, and you must have the signal for the hit and run. Every ball club should have a fixed rule about the attitude of the players toward the umpires. They should be treated courteously, protests being made only on a point of the rules.



RETURN CIRCULATION DEPARTMENT

TO → 202 Main Library

LOAN PERIOD 1 HOME USE	2	3
4	5	6

ALL BOOKS MAY BE RECALLED AFTER 7 DAYS

1-month loans may be renewed by calling 642-3405

6-month loans may be recharged by bringing books to Circulation Desk

Renewals and recharges may be made 4 days prior to due date

DUE AS STAMPED BELOW

APR 18 1991

RENEWAL MAY 09 1991

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY
FORM NO. DD6, 60m, 12/80 BERKELEY, CA 94720

②s

RENEWAL

MAR 31 1962

LD 21-100m-2, '55
(B139s22) 476

General Library
University of California
Berkeley

U.C. BERKELEY LIBRARIES



27493

0031839160

638679

GT 867
M2

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

